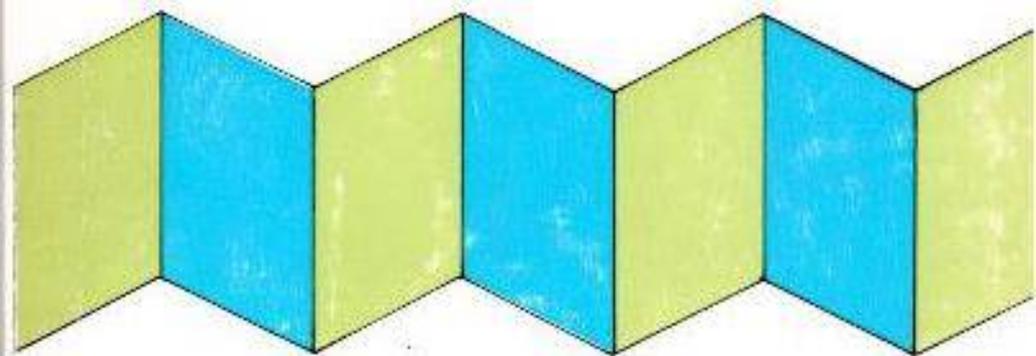


*The New Statesman,*



*The Middle East*



*Khalid Kishtainy*

THE NEW STATESMAN  
AND  
THE MIDDLE EAST

## CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	The New Statesman and the Colonial Question	7
II	Early Records	19
III	The New Statesman and the Mandate	25
IV	The Martin Era	41
V	Farewell Palestine Nation !	53
VI	Labour and the Middle East	59
VII	Partition	67
VIII	The Suez Affair	77
IX	The Six Day War	89
X	A Survey of Treatment	103

PALESTINE ESSAYS - No. 29

All rights reserved by the  
Palestine Research Center,  
Colombani St. off Sadat St.,  
P. O. Box 1691,  
Beirut, Lebanon.  
November 1972.

I  
THE NEW STATESMAN AND THE  
COLONIAL QUESTION

SHORTLY after the close of World War II, a lean young student in his teens walked into the Victory Bookshop, one of the only two bookshops in Baghdad selling English literature. In his *Jallabia* and sandals, he awkwardly asked for a copy of the *New Statesman and Nation*. The shopkeeper looked at him closely and then asked, «For whom? Who is your master?» The young boy put his hand in his *Jallabia* pocket and replied, «For me sir», and produced the price — a shilling — his full week's allowance from his parents. He went out with the magazine leaving the book dealer to his books, undoubtedly to increase his order of the *New Statesman* by one copy. It was the young boy's first English magazine or indeed any magazine that he had ever bought.

He never thought when he produced his shilling that the magazine was going to be a subject for his research, or the title of this tract of his mature years. Week in, week out, he plodded through its pages, laboriously translating passages from it for the leftist press. What did not get published, which was often the case, was not wasted. Every evening, he took with him the *New Statesman* to the local cafe, produced his notes and translations and started to read to his pals the latest comments of Kingsley Martin, G.D.H. Cole or J.B. Priestley on the

future of the British navy, the imperialism of Mr. Bevin and so on.

Such was the prestige with which the *New Statesman* was held among the young intelligentsia of Iraq, the Arab world and, I suppose, most of the other developing countries. Hardly a day passed in those crucial years without some article from this periodical being translated and published by one of Baghdad's dailies. It was not surprising for me to see one day a letter from one of the bank clerks of that city writing to its editor thus:

«The arrival of the *New Statesman* is the great event of the week. It is a refreshing and stimulating draught, especially welcome here in the Middle East where the unfortunately large majority of the community of all races seems interested in little beyond cinema, cabaret and cocktail parties.»

The basic line which rallied the Middle East intellectuals to the magazine was its criticism of Britain's colonial legacy in Afro-Asia and its opposition to the Foreign Office plans for keeping the Union Jack flying high over the eastern Mediterranean. Its championship of social reform and overthrow of archaic pomp and costly white elephants were the very things most needed and debated in the Middle East. It opposed the Baghdad Pact and ridiculed the presence of the obsolete Spitfire squadrons bristling in the sun of the desert and piercing the eyes of the inhabitants like thorns. So did the indigenous intellectuals.

In 1948, the United Nations decided to partition Palestine and the *New Statesman* strongly supported the decision. In the ensuing conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis and the three wars which went with it, the policy of the paper has been based on

upholding the right of Israel for survival and recognition, and consequently opposing the Arab position of « belligerence » and boycott. This policy has been enlarged into an emotional sympathy with the Israeli side, and praise of all things Israeli. It naturally led to the parting of the ways between the *New Statesman* and the Arab world. It was said there that the *New Statesman* supported justice everywhere except when it came to Palestine. What made it the most popular English periodical in Israel made it the least lovable thing on the other side of the ceasefire lines. A love-hate attitude characterized the *New Statesman's* relationship with the peoples of the Middle East, and it behoves us to look back at the early days of courtship.

The history of the *New Statesman and Nation* is related in many sources, but Mr. Edward Hyams' work<sup>1</sup> is the most comprehensive and praiseworthy, and the present tract drew many points from his narrative. The year 1913 witnessed the appearance of the first issue of the *New Statesman* on the bookstalls of London. It was the result of considerable deliberation, hesitation and determination shared by the handful of reformers and socialists who felt the need for a new, rationally progressive magazine. They were not all of the same opinion or approach, but most of them were associated in one form or another with the Fabian Society established some three decades before, in 1882, and committed to evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary socialism. Some of them, like G.D.H. Cole, preached Guild Socialism, the nearest thing to our present-day workers' councils and workers control. Others, like George Bernard Shaw, revelled in Marxist science and its prophecy of the death

(1) Hyams, E., *The New Statesman, the History of the First Fifty Years*, London, 1963.

of capitalism. Sidney and Beatrice Webb leaned towards the pragmatic and the day-to-day tactical conversion of society. All abhorred war and violence; all dreamt of the millenium of a world government or, at least, international harmony.

The *New Statesman* was going to be a departure in English journalism — independent, unaffiliated, widely circulated, yet above the commercialism of the press. National and international morality was to be its only guiding light in addition to the modern technique of science. Most people prophesied its bankruptcy in a matter of weeks on account of its doctrinaire position. Yet, a capital of £5,000 was subscribed by its founders after a series of weekend discussions held at the Webbs'. For an editor, Clifford Sharp, who used to write the Fabian magazine, *The Crusade*, dedicated to the prevention of destitution, was selected and given absolute authority over its editorial policy. The magazine went on losing money well into the thirties and the circulation did not reach a five figure number for many years.

The founders of the *New Statesman* were thus generally a band of reformers who grew up out of the battle against poverty, unemployment, squalor, ignorance and similar social diseases which gnawed at the hearts of the British lower classes. Their concern was therefore internal, and foreign and colonial questions only commanded their attention when they affected things in Britain. Therefore, the fate and troubles of other colonial peoples under the rule of another imperial power merited little treatment from the editor.

On the other hand, many reformers genuinely believed that the colonies helped to alleviate the plight of the British working class by affording outlets for emigration

and by maintaining guaranteed markets for British manufacture, and consequently full employment. At all events, the *New Statesman* remained without a coherently distinct colonial policy when the Turks and Germans surrendered their arms.

A large number of the writers and directors of the *New Statesman* had one form of connection or another with the London School of Economics, which owed its very existence to the effort of the Webbs. G.D.H. Cole, Mostyn Lloyd, Harold Laski and Kingsley Martin all taught there and carried with them to the magazine those ideas which economists postulate as the only answer to any and all problems of the world. They were not just economists, they were socialist economists, and the hub of the scientific critique of the socialists is the waste emanating from the capitalist way of life. Ever since Marx turned to economics, the socialists derided the capitalists for their inability to apply a rational and logical technique of management. Indeed, George Bernard Shaw treated it as a matter of pride for a socialist to beat his opponents, not only in statecraft, but also in day-to-day managerial and personal affairs. The founders of the *New Statesman*, therefore, set out to teach the politicians and statesmen how to run the public departments more efficiently, as well as how to preach social reform. It was hoped that by showing the capitalist the amount of waste and loss incurred and the risks taken, a more sensible way might attract his interests whereby reform and freedom might be less violently introduced. This was the dazzling slogan of the young journal, the establishment of the «Scientific Government».

Hence, the *New Statesman* could hardly be improved upon as a name for the new periodical, which has undoubtedly bred at least one generation of new states-

men. Among other things, the paper owed this name to the suggestion of Arthur Balfour, «bloody Balfour», as the Irish nationalists used to call him. The policies ventilated on the pages of the magazine found their way to the dossiers and state plans of many countries in addition to Britain. One cannot but repeat oneself time and time again whilst reviewing the policies of the various administrations, «But this is exactly what the *New Statesman* told them years before!» Why didn't they listen to it ? !

In pursuit of that objective and in the discussion of any problem, the *New Statesman* sooner or later came to its crucial question: how much is it going to cost? A question which is inherently capitalistic. This was the test applied to the nationalisation of coal, the inauguration of the National Health Scheme and the continuation of war against Germany. If there was no particular *New Statesman* colonial policy, the test of cost was readily applied to the running of the empire, maintaining the British positions in the Middle East and administering the Palestine Mandate. The more «practical» the editor or contributor was, the stronger he bit with his teeth on this piece of fiscal consideration.

Of course, not all of them were dogged practicals, nor are practical people wont to agree on what is actually practical. Insofar as the empire and British possessions were concerned, there were various shades and colours within the «New Statesmanship». In general the socialists, as pointed out by Edward Hyams,<sup>2</sup> were often nearer to the conservatives with their sense of mutual duties, elite responsibility and state interest, than to the liberals with their laissez-faire policies. Clifford Sharp, according to the same author, believed that reform was expected more from a man like Arthur Balfour, for example, than

---

(2) *Ibid.*

from Ramsay McDonald. It is thus not surprising to observe that, whilst the liberals were calling for the disposal of the colonies as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, the Fabians, with Sidney and Beatrice Webb to the fore, were in the camp of the imperialists on this count. Two factors, inter alia, helped to cement this position. The first was selfish and practical, based on the need of England for the colonies and the need to protect British interests and privileged positions therein. The second was idealist and internationalist, heralding the day when mankind becomes all one family. Nationalism was anathema to such a viewpoint. Shaw's definition of the capitalist freedom as the freedom to die of starvation on the streets was just as applicable, in the eyes of the Fabians, to self-determination in regard to the undeveloped world.

Instead of giving independence to a backward people so that they may run riot to their liking and dump their wealth in the rivers, they should be kept under the guidance of the more advanced nation of England, where the struggle for the creation of the new milieu of socialism is being fought and where the worthwhile experiments in more progressive and just forms of government are going on. Once the goal is reached in London, the whole mass of the British Commonwealth of Nations will follow and create a great state of numerous races and peoples at the threshold of the awaited world government. The British Empire, wrote the *New Statesman* soon after the end of the war, had given way to the British Commonwealth, wherein Ireland, India and other Asian nations should enjoy partnership.

Such were some of the views aired in the *New Statesman* on the question of Egyptian independence. The magazine said nothing about the unlawful occupation of

Egypt, which was supposed to be technically an independent country. What comments the editor wrote during the First World War indicated an acceptance of the British occupation of Egypt. Trouble, however, started soon after the war when the Egyptians took to the streets and demanded *Istiqlal* (independence). Now the suppression of the whole people called for more troops and more money. That was the moment of the *New Statesman*. The occupation against the will of the people became too costly to justify, the editor pointed out, and the best way to cut the losses was to grant independence without forfeiting the privileged position of Britain. This was the new deal which the new breed of statesmen should fashion for any rebellious colony. With its sense of a superior knowledge verging on arrogance, the magazine ridiculed the old guards of the empire, «the great intellectuals of the War Office», «the amateur strategists in frock coats», «the pinchbeck Napoleon, Mr. Churchill», and all those who believed in the preservation of the empire by force, in the «delusion that the greatness of this country and of the British Commonwealth of Nations consists in a display of military power and can only be maintained by the use of force. It is the old militarist conception which, however it may have served in the past generations, will prove futile and even calamitous in this.»

The article, published on 10 December 1921, drew a letter from Mr. Edwyn Bevan. He agreed that no nation should impose its will on another, but, «I think that further thought would show that behind the problem of Egypt is the much larger problem forced upon us by the conditions of the new age — the problem of how the freedom of politically backward communities is to be reconciled with the common interests of a world which has grown one as never before». In order to ensure a

just and unselfish supervision over this backward people, a gendarmerie force should be recruited from Sweden, Switzerland or any other neutral country, to keep the Egyptians disciplined. Such were the internationalist sentiments felt by one section of the new statesmen, to be contrasted in the same issue with the editorial comment of self-interest. The editor saw no reason to bring in the Swedes or the Swiss for the Egyptians were ready to accept a British garrison within the framework of agreement. «If Egypt fell into such disorder that what was happening in Cairo or Tanta or the Fayum threatened our legitimate interests, or those of other European states, we might no doubt properly intervene, and we should be able to intervene from a base on the Canal quite effectively.»

The editorial attitude cannot accordingly be accepted as primarily based on faith in the socialist future and fraternity with the colonial peoples, for the streak of self-interest is evidently dominating. As the Egyptians stepped up their resistance, the magazine returned and lashed out at the colonial policy of Winston Churchill in an article carried on 4 February 1922:

«The imperialism of twenty years ago is a fallen idol... How many Englishmen regret the «loss» of Ireland? And how many Englishmen will thrill at the thought of an Egypt dragooned into the British Empire? We do not believe that one man in a hundred in this country cares a brass button today about the number of red splotches on the map of the world, and we are quite certain that not one in ten thousand is willing to pay for adventures to increase them.» The writer went on to put this cynical maxim unworthy of his magazine, «The task of statesmen is to find a new basis for their imperial policy». And the new basis for British policy in Egypt, the

writer asserted, was to make Egypt «a client state affording a privileged position for Britain».

The internationalist side of the «New Statesmanship» vis-a-vis the colonial question happened to coincide with that of Lenin after his advent to power, i.e. that the more advanced nation should not part ways with its backward client nations, but rather carry them along, and even cudgel them along if need be, to socialism. Yet, the streak of opportunism based on the self-interest of Britain left none of the international spirit to give credence to the internationalist call of the magazine. The *New Statesman*, for example, followed the progress of the British campaign in Mesopotamia (Iraq) with satisfaction, but when the Iraqis rebelled and started shooting British soldiers, the socialist weekly lamented the entry of Britain into Iraq and called on the Government to withdraw to the Gulf. It was again becoming too expensive. The only thing which interested Britain in Iraq, the paper said, was oil, and it was doubtful that Britain could take all the oil for itself. As oil was bound to be shared out by the various international oil companies, there was no business for British soldiers to be sitting in Iraq and spending money.

Such has been the approach which the *New Statesman* maintained with unflinching consistency throughout its history. Years later, in 1947, when the future of Britain in the Middle East was discussed, the magazine agreed with the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Bevin, that it would be a «national disaster» for Britain to lose her oil interests in the area; she would never achieve a balance of trade without them. Where Mr. Bevin went wrong was in thinking that troops were necessary to protect those interests. Needless to say, events have proved that the *New Statesman* was right and the successive foreign

secretaries were wrong, at least on this score.

Yet there was another part in the mental system of the journal, the part of man, or of God. The schism in the personality of all socialists, and idealists for that matter, was projected on the *New Statesman* in its series of tableaux of two-faced wizards, one coldly looking at the statistics and vested interests of Britain, the other turning toward the perfect world of disinterested morality, the world of «collectivism» as the leading editorial of the first number specified. From this other side of the journal, we get its determined support for the League of Nations,<sup>3</sup> and later the United Nations, its respect for promises given and agreements concluded, its opposition to war and the use of force, its hatred of dictators and fascists, its championship of self-determination and concern for the plight of the underdogs. Between the two sides, the *New Statesman* had to walk its tightrope of ambivalence vis-a-vis the Middle East issues. Palestine was a living example of the contradiction.

3026

(3) The *New Statesman* printed the first detailed design of the League of Nations, prepared by Leonard Woolf.

## II EARLY RECORDS

THE EARLIEST instance the present writer could find on the issue of Palestine goes back to the early days of the Great War. A lengthy article carried over the initials of « A.M.H. » appeared on 21 November 1914 with the ambitious title «The Future of Palestine». The article reviewed the long history of Jewish attachment to the Holy Land which, the writer asserted, had become only dormant but never dead. He went on to give accounts of the Zionist successes in reclaiming the old home, the rise of Dr. Theodor Herzl, the spread of anti-Semitism, the revival of Hebrew and so on. The Zionist spirit was in evidence in such utterances as that the country was relatively uninhabited, the Jews were a distinct nationality, Polish Jews should be moved to Palestine and Syria. The propagandist pen was carefully concealed behind the anonymous «A.M.H.» and adroitly led the reader to such themes as the economic advantages accruing to England from the Zionist enterprise, and how most of the Palestinian Jewish wine and citrus fruits were exported to Egypt and Britain, the foremost trading country with Palestine. The economic attraction was further consolidated by an emotional consideration invoking the «sentimental, educational and archaeological» bonds which linked Englishmen with «the Holy Land of the Jews ». Beaconsfield, Salisbury, Palmerston, Oliphant and Chamberlain were recalled in connection with their championship of the «restoration» of the Jewish Commonwealth. «A.M.H.» warned against any thought

which Britain might cast on the Arabs: «To give Palestine self-government today would be a blunder and a crime». The article went on to conclude with this appeal:

«Let Britain remember her past and think of her future, and secure to the Jews under her protection the possibility of building up a new Palestine on the ruins of their ancient home.»

Whether by coincidence or scheme, the same number carried another article by Arthur Weigall on the future of Egypt. Mr. Weigall projected the difficulties of the Egyptian position and the circumstances which compelled Britain to occupy the country. His conclusion was that the annexation of Egypt by Britain became an unavoidable solution and the only possible one. Both these articles were taken up by the editor who did not hesitate to give them his editorial backing. Commenting on the Zionist thesis, he wrote, «The scheme, we suppose, will find sympathy practically everywhere». He was skeptical, however, on the appointment of Britain as a protector, for the task was going to be very costly.

On 23 January 1915, the same contributor returned to the subject with the same partisan spirit. In another long article under the heading, «The Regeneration of Palestine», the anonymous writer, actually the well-known Zionist scholar Albert Hyamson,<sup>1</sup> dwelt on the admirable «achievements» of the Jewish immigrants, their «reclamation» of land and their «revival» of Hebrew culture. In a passing reference to the indigenous population he made the reassuring remark that they were a peaceful lot and the «least troublesome» people.

(1) A. Hyamson modified his views radically in a bi-national direction after his direct contact with the existing population as an official of the Mandate Administration.

These two contributions are very important to our story. As mentioned above, the *New Statesman* had not then given much thought to the Middle East. None of its contributors had any experience or adequate knowledge of the area. The editor's improvised comments, his uncertain words, «I suppose», are indicative. Two well-informed contributions from an obviously knowledgeable source were therefore welcome to the editorial desk, particularly when well introduced and recommended. Here lies one of the terrible sins of the free press. Instead of admitting ignorance and keeping off the field of ignorance, a newspaper editor tries to beat his competitors by publishing any intelligent contribution properly submitted to him without bothering about the differing opinions. In the case of the *New Statesman*, it was agreed from the beginning to give the periodical a collective ideology and responsibility so that every line looked as if it had been written by the same person. The procedure proved to be impractical, as some principal contributors, mainly Bernard Shaw, expressed opinions which did not correspond to the accepted policy of the magazine or meet with the approval of the editor. As a compromise, it was agreed to initial such contributions, a compromise to which G.B.S. took great exception and the famous row led virtually to his withdrawal from the magazine.

The two articles were thus put outside the collective policy of the *New Statesman* by initialling them, but nevertheless the letters «A.M.H.» kept the readers still in the dark as to the identity of the writer. With the collective policy of the magazine in mind, his ideas could easily slip in as part of the «New Statesmanship», or indeed of Fabianism in general. There was no-one in London representing those «least troublesome» people to write about the store of troubles soon to open. It was one more instance of the Arab case going by default. The

momentous feature of the two articles discussed is their timing, their early appearance in the formative years of the new periodical, and during the first year of the war which was going to reshape the destiny of Palestine and the Middle East region.

On the other hand, not until the post-war violent outbreak of nationalism in Egypt did the *New Statesman* take any note of the infant, but steadily growing Arab nationalism and its correlative Arab cultural revival in the Middle East. The editorial comment welcomed the Zionist project and simultaneously questioned the wisdom of British responsibility, for it revealed that the gap between the journal's idealism and self-interest was rather wide in regard to this project. As the war went on, this gap was bridged by a new military appreciation. None of the *New Statesman* staff had any particular standing in things military. But a closer examination of Zionist literature in Britain during the war leads us to the activities of the Palestine Committee. On 22 November 1915, the military expert Mr. Herbert Sidebotham published a leader article in the *Manchester Guardian* with the title of «The Defence of Egypt». The gist of the article was that the development of the new machines of military transport made Sinai irrelevant as a defence line for the Suez Canal. Henceforth, to defend Egypt, the Judaeon hills must be garrisoned as a first line of defence. Palestine must be made a buffer state.

The significance of this article was grasped by Chaim Weizmann, who lost no time in approaching Sidebotham with a view to elaborating the thesis and submitting it officially to the Foreign Office. In February 1916, a memorandum was thus submitted by Mr. Sidebotham with the encouragement of the two leaders of British Zionism, Chaim Weizmann and Harry Sacher, to Sir Ronald

Graham, head of the Near and Middle Eastern Section of the Foreign Office.<sup>2</sup> The effort resulted in a joint publicity enterprise in which the British Zionists and Sidebotham publicised the new military concept synchronized with the «restoration» of Palestine to the Jews as the best dependable guardians of the British position. Numerous articles were written along such lines and fed to the national press, and the Palestine Committee was soon formed with its organ *Palestine*.<sup>3</sup>

When the Balfour Declaration was made on 2 November 1917, there was no contradiction left in the mind of the *New Statesman* between sponsoring the Jewish accession to Palestine and its fiscal strain on the British Empire. The chief editor, Clifford Sharp, was then doing his military service, and his position was filled by the literary editor, Mr. J.C. Squire, whose knowledge of the Middle East was even scantier than his predecessor's. Under his direction, the paper played the tune of the Palestine Committee's military logic, and reiterated the argument that the war had shown Palestine as the new realistic defence line for Egypt, and in order to make Palestine an economically prosperous country «with a population attached to the British Empire», the land must be given to Zionism under the protection of Britain. Thus the writer welcomed Balfour's historic letter as «one of the best pieces of statesmanship that we can show in these later days». The editorial comment went on to dwell on the position of the Jews as unassimilated (the Zionists prefer to use unassimilable) sojourners, a position which could never be satisfactory. Even the assimilationists among them did not allow intermarriage

(2) Sidebotham, H., *Great Britain and Palestine*, London, 1937, p. 33.

(3) The story of the Palestine Committee is given in the same source, *Ibid.*

and kept themselves to themselves as a distinct race. «It is far better... to make a nation of them.»

The reference to intermarriage and distinctiveness has a slight anti-Semitic ring, but then the relationship between Zionism and anti-Semitism is something which is accepted by both the Zionist and the anti-Zionist.

The *New Statesman*, however, did not act in any exceptional manner in this regard, as the Balfour Declaration was welcomed by most of the leading papers, including the sister periodical *The Nation*. Notwithstanding, the *New Statesman's* stand was quite forthcoming in view of the fact that world socialism was still critical of Zionism and the British Labour Party had not then shown any readiness to commit itself on its behalf.

The Balfour Declaration balanced its promise to the Zionists with a proviso for «it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine». *The New Statesman's* editorial made no reference to this part of the deal. The provision was only inserted in the Declaration at a later stage, and in deference to the anti-Zionist pressure on Whitehall. The original Declaration as drafted by the Zionist side in July 1917 kept silent on the rights of the indigenous population,<sup>4</sup> and the *New Statesman* in its comment seems to have reverted the document to its original form.

(4) See Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, London, 1961, pp. 470 & 664.

### III

## THE NEW STATESMAN AND THE MANDATE

AT THIS STAGE most British papers paid little attention to Balfour's letter to Lord Rothschild, and it was gradually felt that the idea of a Jewish National Home, however commendable it might have looked, would soon die a natural death. The *New Statesman* did not give much space to the matter until the policy began to crack. Zionist contributors, however, continued to feed the magazine with lengthy essays praising the achievements and good sense of the Jewish settlers. Not until the summer of 1922 did the editorial office elaborate any particular policy on the problem. The ignorance of the *New Statesman* vis-a-vis the Middle East continued on its almost scandalous level. On 27 May 1926, the magazine carried a letter by the socialist Egyptian writer, Salama Musa, lamenting ignorance on such matters in Egypt as the differences between Zaghlul's party and Adli's party.

The relationship between the journal and the British Mandate is a case-study for the critics of non-violence. The mother of the *New Statesman*, the Fabian Society, was founded on the principle of non-violence and most of the editorial staff were confirmed pacifists. Yet, they often acted, as far as the Middle East was concerned at least, as if nothing mattered except violence. Whatever the Zionists managed to gain, regardless of the means, was upheld by the paper as a reality, a fait accompli. On the opposite side, as long as the Arabs behaved decently

and made no trouble, the Jewish National Home was a sublime British undertaking, but the British commitment and the whole project were brought into question as soon as a group of Arabs stoned a Jewish bus. The typical imperialist policy much criticised by the *New Statesman* in latter years, was, in fact, closely endorsed by the same journal. Unwittingly, its non-violent editors went on putting a premium on violence whenever the question of Palestine was raised.

Indeed, the editor formulated his Palestine policy as a result of the Arab violence of 1921. After long ignoring the Palestinians, he took cognizance of their case in an editorial published on 24 June 1922:

«The Arabs have a strong case which cannot be dismissed by eloquent speeches from Mr. Balfour or sentimental appeals on behalf of the Jews or by specious suggestions that the Arabs had their way in Hijaz and Iraq and have no business to make a fuss in Palestine. The case of the Jews is not superior, but there is room for both. That is their case, that the Arabs will benefit and a Palestine nation will be created. If these assumptions are correct, the Arab case breaks down, at least in theory.»

«A Palestine nation»<sup>1</sup> became the axis of the *New Statesman's* Palestine policy under the editorship of Clifford Sharp. In practical terms, the concept was the only possible door open for Britain in view of the conflicting promises given to both sides. But there was more to recommend a synthetic Palestinian nationhood to the socialists. Their world was a brave new world

(1) This is, incidentally, the slogan which was destined to shape the ideology of the Palestinian guerrilla organisations after 1967.

filled with all that ruthless enthusiasm that emanates from idealism and belief in progress. Great faith in science and the human will moved them to visions and possibilities stretching beyond anything imagined in science fiction. The possibility of mixing two communities of entirely different background and orientation and the creation of a test-tube new nation was something which could not fail in its appeal to people who viewed national questions with dislike.

The editor did his homework on this vexing question and reached such an appreciation during that summer of 1922; he came out with a long article on 8 July outlining the paper's position. Under the heading «The Jews and the Gentiles», the *New Statesman* welcomed the success of Mr. Churchill (as Colonial Secretary) in securing the approval of the House of Commons for his Palestine policy based on his interpretation of the Balfour Declaration. The article said:

«We need not disguise from ourselves the fact that it is a dangerous as well as an interesting experiment. It is based on a pledge — a pledge rather hastily given, as we believe, at a time of stress when statesmen were not in the habit of looking beyond the day after tomorrow at the furthest. The pledge was one of a series in which we entangled ourselves in the Middle East, and it is not surprising that it should have landed us in difficulties with the Arabs, to whom other undertakings, more generous than discreet, had been offered.»

The writer warned that to abandon the Declaration then would be scandalous. The establishment of a national home for the Jews was legitimate, so was the institution of the Jews into a nation. Yet Zionism and the Jewish National Home were not the only way. There was another way for the creation of a new nationality

based on the creation of a Palestinian nation of both Arabs and Jews.

A second consideration was that of internationalism. Zionism should not be supported in its aggression towards other people; nor should the Arabs receive support in keeping the country only for themselves, «depopulated» and «barren». The development of Palestine required a capacity which the Arabs did not possess. Britain should support the hope of blending the Western and Eastern cultures and the beginning of a hundred things which we were accustomed to relegate to Mr. H.G. Wells' utopias. Over and above, it would not be expensive at the price Mr. Churchill was promising — one million a year. «And if it succeeds, it will more than pay for itself.»

As in other cases, the idealists miscalculated because of the omission of some essential fact, and the miscalculation of the *New Statesman*, excepting the Zionphiles among them, was enormous, in view of their wide gap of knowledge on the Middle East. The essential fact omitted here was the separate development of the *Yishuf* (the Jewish community in Palestine). The editor who wrote in 1917 of the reluctance of the Jews to mix and intermarry did not see that the same inclination was going to be doubled and trebled in Palestine vis-a-vis «backward» Arabs.

The wool was drawn over the eyes of the readers and the editorial staff by the periodic articles inserted by Zionist spokesmen. On 5 November 1921, the year of the first disturbances, Leonard Stein, the Political Secretary of the World Zionist Organisation (1920-1929), published in the journal, as a correspondent from Palestine, a long article running to three columns, hailing the great benefits heaped on the Arabs as a result of the Zionist enterprise. He denied that the purchase of the

Arab lands of the Vale of Jezreel had inflicted any injury on the indigenous inhabitants. «There has been no tendency to elbow the Arabs out.» The blame was put on the Vatican and the Palestinian Christians who were said to be sowing anti-Zionist propaganda. The police were accused of joining the Arab rioters and the British administration was blamed for treating the rioters in a civilized manner to which they were not used. The failure to achieve an entente between the Arabs and the Jews was ascribed to the policy of the Government. The fear of the Palestinians of being relegated to a second-class minority or of expulsion from the country was answered thus: «On the other hand, it is already apparent that, so far from forthwith submerging the Arabs, the Jews will, for some time to come, have difficulty in keeping pace with their natural increase».

Leonard Stein was no socialist or a soldier of the Fabian statesmanship. His essay was clearly a lance for the Zionist cause and must have been recognised as such at the editorial office. No opposing item was carried by the paper and his accounts remained the *New Statesman's* only accounts of events on the spot, a procedure which the progressive periodical was going to repeat time and time again, whenever the problem of Palestine commanded detailed attention.

In the next issue (12 November) the editor took up the question of the Palestinians' anxiety. «Much of this feeling, no doubt, is illfounded», he wrote in his editorial, «but it is only too clear from the evidence set out in the report<sup>2</sup> that the extreme Zionists are jeopardising their own cause. The British administration has taken measures to remedy certain obvious evils pointed out by the

(2) Report of the Commission of Enquiry under the Chairmanship of Sir Thomas Haycraft. *Cmd. 1640*, 1921.

Commissioners; but, as we have frequently urged in these columns, it really rests with the Jews themselves to conciliate the Arabs and make a Palestinian nation. If they cannot do that, the Balfour Declaration will be waste paper.»

The magazine returned to the subject on 27 May 1922 and addressed itself to the British Palestine Government in a passage itself smacking of impatience. «Convince the Arabs that they were wrong or convince us that they were right in their fears.» It is very easy now to blame the writer for his naiveté and see the realistic dimension of those fears, but at the time, before anybody ever heard of Hitler, the Jewish National Home looked, to those who supported it, like another forlorn dream. Furthermore, the writer was only one of many who were confounded by the equivocation and double talk of the Zionist leaders.

Clifford Sharp was more interested in domestic issues, and the foreign affairs were generally left to Ratcliffe, Ensor, Mostyn Lloyd and Lewis Namier (Bronstein-Namierski). Sir Lewis was an ardent Zionist and played no small part in pressuring the successive British governments on behalf of the cause.<sup>3</sup> But such was the formation of the *New Statesman* that its collective policy remained the sole responsibility of its chief editor. Mr. Sharp's starting point in colonial matters was his skepticism, if not cynicism, about the ability of the colonial peoples to develop their countries without the guidance and help of Western civilisation. Their nationalist movements, or indeed nationalism in all its colours, did not impress him.<sup>4</sup> His position was well delineated

(3) John, R., & Hadawi, S. *The Palestine Diary*, Vol. 1. p. 335, Beirut: The Palestine Research Center, 1970.

(4) Hyams, p. 22.

in his review of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* and his sharp criticism of the colonial liberation ideas, the Indian cultural heritage and the native capabilities.

«Infant» was one of the easy adjectives which he applied to the Palestinian people, and their behaviour was churlishly described in most cases. In his pamphlet «The Case against the Referendum»,<sup>5</sup> Mr. Sharp dismissed the principle of rule by the majority vote. Where there was a conflict of national communities, the solution lay in conciliation and not referendum. Although he postulated this view in connection with Ireland, its relevance to the Palestine scene is obvious.

Neither Zionism nor Arab nationalism were beautiful things for him, and the only worthwhile feature of the Palestine scene was to see the country and its inhabitants improved with the help of the richer and experienced Jews, all under the protection and auspices of Great Britain.

Another factor which affected the thinking of the *New Statesman* was related to the idealism of its vanguards. Part of their «New Statesmanship» was the belief that breach of faith, unreliability, dishonesty and trickery are as bad for good polity as they are for good shopkeeping. The editor thus went on to repeat that although the Balfour Declaration had been made under dubious circumstances, the promise, once made, must be upheld. Belief in international authority was no lesser imperative in such thinking. As the Palestine Mandate with its correlative Jewish National Home was adopted by the League of Nations, the upbuilding of the Home must be supported by the paper. The same position was repeated in connection with the partition of the country and the

(5) *Fabian Tract* No. 155, 1911.

establishment of Israel by the majority decision of the United Nations. Arab defiance of such decisions could not receive any lasting sympathy from the editorial staff. The Arab position became more difficult because the Zionist side enjoyed considerable influence in Geneva over the members of the Mandates Commission, often resulting in quashing the British policy itself whenever it displeased the Jewish Agency.<sup>6</sup> Peculiarly though, the subject of conflicting British promises given also to the Arabs during the Great War, a subject which occupied large spaces in the British press over many years, remained scarcely touched by the *New Statesman*.

One of the political storms which swept over the path of the Mandate was occasioned by the award of the concession for the electrification of Palestine to Pinchas Rutenberg, a Russian Jew. The concession furtively granted by Winston Churchill over the heads of other business concerns stirred protests among imperialist circles in London, on account of the economic possibilities which the project had opened up and which were denied to English businessmen. The *New Statesman* surmised that the whole storm was due to the one fact that Pinchas Rutenberg was not an Englishman. It reminded the critics of the terms of the Mandate as stipulated by the League of Nations on the basis of no trade discrimination:

«But is Palestine part of the British Empire? And is it the duty of the Palestine administration to consider primarily British interests? We were under the impression that we were acting in Palestine as a mandatory power under the Covenant of the League of Nations, that

(6) See Weizmann, C., *Trial and Error*, London, 1950, pp. 404, 450, 483-4, 508-9; also Kishtatny, K., *Verdict in Absentia*, Beirut, 1969, p. 102.

is to say, that we were trustees primarily for the welfare and interests of the people of Palestine, and that special privileges for our own trade or commerce were the very last thing we were expected to consider.»<sup>7</sup>

The storm over the Rutenberg concession developed as much in Palestine as it did in the City and Westminster. It is now difficult to know whether the editor had heard at all of the Arab capitalist competitors who were also clamouring for the concession, or whether he simply brushed these anticipations aside as the confident dreams of «infants».

Britain's moral obligations were again voiced during the 1929 communal troubles. Those were the eventful months during which blood literally streamed in the streets and H.M. Government had to bring in further military reinforcements. The awaited Arab violence had at last come, said the editor at the beginning of his article of 7 September 1929. It proved to be the strongest thing he had ever written in condemnation of the whole Zionist project and that unfortunate miscalculation of Arthur Balfour:

« His original pledge — which may have been demanded by the circumstances of the moment — was itself a dangerous leap in the dark. Moreover it cut across other pledges which we had previously given to the Arabs. It was a blunder, perhaps the worst blunder that Lord Balfour ever made in the course of his political life; but he was then in a position which entitled him to speak for England, and his pledge therefore became our pledge and must be honoured. But it is a most unfortunate business.»

Therefore the life and property of the Jews must be

(7) 2 June 1922.

protected in Palestine at whatever price to Britain. « But no such pledge can be regarded as eternal. It was not submitted to Parliament, still less to the sovereign electorate of Great Britain.» Hence, the pledge must be modified or, at least, a time limit set for its duration, say ten or twenty years. An interesting point to observe here is the writer's protestation that Balfour's disposal of the future of Palestine was not sanctioned by the « sovereign electorate of Great Britain ». Neither here nor elsewhere did he cast a thought to the consent of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine itself. Indeed, the *New Statesman* stood solidly against the proposal to set up in Palestine any representative council in which the wishes of the majority might be solicited and respected. But true to the patronising form, the editor presented their case for them in the article under discussion. Having expressed his pleasure at seeing the Jews «return» to Palestine, the country, he said, could only be called their country in a historical sense. The Arabs were its inhabitants and had been so for more than a thousand years. The right of the Jews to return to it was no more than the right of the Saxons to land in England from which they had been ousted in 1066.

« In short the historical case for Jewish rights in Palestine with all its religious, political, financial and sentimental backing, is in truth no case at all. »

This was the time for the editor to express his anger at the Zionist pressure to which his office must have been subjected like most of the other editorial offices in Fleet Street. « Jewish financial influence in the newspaper world », he wrote, « tends to hinder any really disinterested consideration of the problem ». One of the facts which he came to consider was the Jewish preponderance in the British Government of Palestine, although the

Jews made up only one-fifth of the population. England must abandon that pro-Jewish bias. « Active pro-Semitism is as tiresome and impossible as anti-Semitism. »

The Jewish influence in the newspaper world to which he referred was reflected in his own paper during the crisis under discussion by Zionist contributions carried under the initials of L.S. (Leonard Stein) and W.Z. (probably the extreme Zionist W.B. Ziff), hailing again the progress and economic growth of Palestine because of the Jews, predicting a prosperous future for the country and stressing the argument that the Jewish National Home was costing nothing to the British tax payers.

The 1929 episode underlined in yet another example the fluid approach of the *New Statesman's* pacifism. Shortly before the blood flowed, the journal carried an article<sup>8</sup> praising the conditions in Palestine and observing that Arab-Jewish relations were improving all the time. It was, therefore, left to the clubs and daggers only to shake the magazine out of its complacency and produce the article which took so much note of the Arab case. Yet, once peace was restored again, the magazine advised continuation of the British mandate in all its terms and made the unsubstantiated claim that both Jew and Arab wanted Britain to continue in its administration of Palestine, that British policy should maintain its course, parliamentary representation should be denied to the population, and that land purchase by the Jews should remain free from any restrictions other than what was required for the protection of the *fellah*. These were the lines advanced by the *New Statesman* in comment on the Report of the Shaw Commission which

---

(8) 28 Aug. 1929.

investigated the cause of the communal conflict.

It was the Labour government of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald which had the misfortune of sorting out the 1929 troubles and the *New Statesman* was, at least ideologically, involved in the matter, for the man who was sitting in the Colonial Office was Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb), the father of the journal. With both reports at his desk, the Shaw Report and Simpson Report<sup>9</sup>, Lord Passfield issued the famous White Paper of October 1930.<sup>10</sup> The paper was so ill-received by the Zionist side that the wave of world-wide protest went so far as to burn effigies of the Colonial Secretary outside British Consulates in the United States. The biographer of the Webbs, Margaret Cole, another *New Statesman* personality, considered the Palestine episode, and that of Kenya, as the only serious political defeats suffered by Sidney Webb during his career. The Webbs were far more articulate in foreign affairs than most of the founders of the paper and their appreciation of international issues stemmed from their deep belief in internationalism. They belonged to the pre-war generation of socialists who looked at Zionism with suspicion. To them, it was imperialism, big business and reaction. Sidney Webb was therefore «the most anti-Zionist Secretary of State with whom Zionists had to deal at any time».<sup>11</sup>

Kingsley Martin described Sidney Webb as a man of pure reason, and his reason coupled with his unshakable belief in the socialist idea, the science of life, freed him from the expediencies and pressures which have influenced nearly every politician who had to deal with the Arab-Zionist conflict. During the same year, he had

(9) *Cmd. 3530 and Cmd. 3686.*

(10) *Cmd. 2968.*

(11) Bykes, C., *Cross Roads to Israel*, London, 1965, p. 140.

to deal with a somewhat similar question related to the white settlers of East Africa and his White Paper on the subject, «Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa», stipulated that «...the interest of the African natives must be paramount, and that if, and when, those interests and the interest of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail...»<sup>12</sup> This principle strikes any fair-minded reader as just and reasonable, yet when Lord Passfield tried to apply the same to Palestine, there was an uproar. The case of the Jews, it was repeatedly said, was a special case.

This point was the crux of the matter. The interests of either the Jews or the Arabs must have priority, and the question remained which. The founder of the *New Statesman* had the courage to answer the simple question, but the child of his thought failed to face up to the facts. In dealing with the White Paper controversy, it fell back on what was described as its «trip to the moon» of Arab-Jewish co-operation and nationhood synthetics.

A distinct «Statesmanly» approach in which the paper took great pride was the style introduced first by Bernard Shaw and was soon known as the «matter-of-fact» style. What seemed to be a complicated issue was rescued from its trappings, irrelevancies and high-falutin considerations and reduced to its basic common sense facts. It is a great pity that George Bernard Shaw was not interested in the Middle East and nobody ventured to deal with the Arab-Zionist conflict by the «matter-of-fact» approach. The paper remained as deluded as the rest of the press on this issue and failed to see that nationalism is an exercise in self-assertion and not

(12) *Cmd. 3573.*

platonic romance. Under the heading «Councils of Despair»,<sup>13</sup> it described Passfield's policy as «a deplorable set-back to the experiment in Palestine, and at worst an admission that the experiment is hopeless». Although the conditions of the Arab population needed to be improved, the Jews could not, it said, wait until they were improved. The new policy would undermine the possibility of co-operation between the Jews and the Arabs which was necessary for the welding of a Palestine nation. The paper returned to the subject in an editorial on 8 November when it said «We shall be content to see the White Paper relegated to a museum of diplomatic curiosities».

These comments were passed when Sharp was no longer in command, as his steady alcoholic deterioration had already taken the editorial affairs out of his hands. The paper's attack on the policy of Sidney Webb, who had only resigned from the *New Statesman* on his accession to the Cabinet, was one instance of the high-minded independence of the paper and at the same time the extent of its sympathy with the Zionist cause. One of the paper's strong men was Harold Laski who played a decisive role, according to Kingsley Martin,<sup>14</sup> in defeating the White Paper.

The Labour Cabinet could not keep up its resistance and the Prime Minister had to yield to the pressure.<sup>15</sup> The *New Statesman* itself seems to have worried about the electioneering prospects of the Labour Party. In its comment on the Whitechapel by-election, it observed that Labour lost many votes in this constituency with its

(13) 25 October 1930.

(14) See Chapter IV.

(15) For a description of this pressure see Marlowe, J., *The Seat of Pilate*, London, 1959, p. 124.

large Jewish population, because the opposing Liberal candidate was a staunch Zionist. Welcoming the Government's statement which explained away the White Paper, the *New Statesman* carried a special article, «Second Thoughts on Palestine», in which the writer warned «...nothing but mischief can come, alike to Palestine and the Mandatory, from the belief or the pretence that the Conservatives stand for the Jews and the Labour for the Arabs». The same article reiterated the hope of creating the Palestine nation, but went on simultaneously to make the suggestion that the Palestinian Arabs might be moved to Transjordan. The *New Statesman* nevertheless parted ways with Zionism on the question of the proposed Legislative Council, which the paper could not oppose with a truly clear conscience.

Sir Drummond Shiels, who had to defend Passfield's policy before the Mandates Commission, summed up the loneliness of their position in these words:

«There was no Arab Agency<sup>16</sup> in London at that time and there was no popular public statement of the Arab case. There was no Arab member in the House of Commons or the House of Lords. On the other hand, every political party had its Jewish (though not always necessarily Zionist) members in both houses, the Labour Party having perhaps more Jewish members than any other. Only the Zionist side of the Palestine question was heard and pressure was constantly being applied to the Colonial Office by members of Parliament and others who did not clearly understand what the responsibility of the Colonial Office was.»<sup>17</sup>

The year 1930 was the first occasion for the kind of

(16) The Zionists had their strong Jewish Agency.

(17) Cole, M., *The Webbs and Their Work*, London, 1949, p. 213.

propaganda campaign which Britain was to witness from the Zionist side in the years to come. The 1929 comment that the Jewish case was «in truth no case at all» was the last of its kind to be seen in the *New Statesman*, which witnessed in November 1930 how the policy of the most determined politician was twisted out of his hand by the pressure of the Zionist enthusiasts. Further developments came to play and consolidate the new accent of the paper.

#### IV

### THE MARTIN ERA

THE LONG term of Clifford Sharp's editorship came to its final conclusion in 1930 although much of the work had already been slipping out of his control as a result of his increased alcoholism. In 1931, the Board decided to appoint the late Kingsley Martin, a *Guardian* man with no previous connection with the formal work of the Fabian Society or the socialist movement as a whole. Beatrice Webb, however, thought of him as «thoroughly Fabian in his methods» and afraid of the effect of communist propaganda on the Labour Party.<sup>1</sup> His father was a Unitarian minister of the Church and an active member of the Fabian Society. The policy of the magazine continued along its established lines with only minor changes in emphasis rather than principles. The era of Kingsley Martin — for the *New Statesman* became Kingsley Martin during his 38 years of tenure — witnessed a noticeable shift toward the Zionist angle as far as Palestine was concerned, but the shift was by no means due simply to Mr. Martin's personality or sympathies.

It was in this era that Hitler rose to power with his anti-Semitic impact on the Jewry. It was also in this period that the *New Statesman* amalgamated with the other progressive periodical *The Nation* to form the *New Statesman and Nation*. *The Nation* was known for its

(1) *Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-1932*, edited by M. Cole. London, 1956, p. 134.

anti-imperialist tone,<sup>3</sup> some of which was absorbed by the newly amalgamated magazine. The imperial and parental role of Britain in the Middle East and Palestine, therefore, lost some of its relevance and the anti-Zionist cry among some imperialist circles, worried about Britain's position in the Arab World, sounded hoarse now to the editor. Another transformation in the biography of the *New Statesman* after the twenties was its gradual growth from a committed periodical with a limited circulation to a mass weekly. When the new editor took over, the sale of the magazine was below the 12,000 figure and there were recurrent annual losses. On his retirement in the sixties, John Freeman received a prosperous magazine with a circulation in the region of ninety thousand. Although the *New Statesman's* readers remained within the brackets of an intellectual elite, the wider circulation took the magazine out of its narrow world of conscious socialists into the world of a liberal middle class, a trend which is still gaining ground.

Kingsley Martin himself was more of a liberal than a socialist; he certainly was no doctrinaire and his solidarity with some communist actions could only have come from a liberal ever in sympathy with anything new. His support for the Munich Agreement was an error totally out of step with the socialist forces.

Like his predecessor, Martin was not interested in the Middle East and his accounts as given in his book *The Editor* touched on most of the questions which preoccupied his mind during his career except the Middle

(2) *The Nation*, for example, was sceptical about the mandate system and said that it could only recommend itself if the interests of the mandated people were given priority over those of the mandatory power or other involved parties. (2 August 1919).

East.<sup>3</sup> As an experienced journalist he came to realise, as he wrote in 1947, that «a woman run over by a bus in Piccadilly has more selling value than a million dying of starvation in China».<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, if he did not bring with him to the *New Statesman* any particular knowledge of the Middle East he came to his new office loaded with pro-Zionist sympathies. Unlike their counter-part on the continent, where Jewish nationalism was held as an obstacle to Jewish emancipation and integration, the English liberals developed a long-standing friendship with the Zionists dating back to the issue of the Balfour Declaration by the Lloyd George Government. It was in Manchester where the Zionist seed found its truly fertile ground in England. In its university Chaim Weizmann taught, and there he came in contact with the influential editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, C.P. Scott, who was easily wooed by the great master of persuasion. Weizmann was eventually introduced to Lloyd George by Scott and the wheel started turning. The flirtation led to the pro-Zionist orientation of the *Manchester Guardian*. To the offices of the leading daily Kingsley Martin was invited, in 1927, by C.P. Scott, and there he remained until he joined the *New Statesman*.

More instrumental in the pro-Zionist position of Martin was his long and close association with Harold Laski inside and outside Turnstile (the *New Statesman's* offices at Holborn). Laski's attitudes to the Zionist project deserve some attention at this juncture, in view of his immense influence on the British Labour Movement in general and the *New Statesman* school in particular. The Laskis owed their name to their Jewish origin in Poland, the country which produced the elite of the Zionist movement and Israeli politics. Pushed by East

(3) Martin, K., *The Editor*, London, 1968.

(4) Martin, K., *The Press the Public Wants*, London, 1947, p. 78.

European anti-Semitism, they too settled in Manchester, within the exclusive Jewish quarter of that industrial city. There, young Harold was raised in a strict religious manner and with all the principles of Jewish solidarity.<sup>5</sup>

Kingsley Martin mentions that he «seldom remembers him discussing Jewish problems or speaking of himself as a Jew. Hitler changed all that.»<sup>6</sup> The same biographer, however, dwells on the frenzied activities in which Laski launched himself on behalf of the Zionist project during the Passfield Paper controversy (1931), long before Hitler's rise to power. During those critical days, he used his influence on labourite circles and asked Mr. McDonald to dismiss Sidney Webb or withdraw the policy declaration which he made. Having achieved that, he pressed on with his initiative and, in 1931, called on the Government to change those British officials who were undesirable to the Jewish Agency (a euphemism for the Zionist organisation). Another Zionist demand he espoused was that Palestine should be administered directly from London, free from local considerations. Whether it was the influence of Laski on the *New Statesman* or the influence of the Zionist Organisation on both, the idea of opening Transjordan for the settlement of the Palestinian Arabs was advocated simultaneously but separately by the *New Statesman* and Harold Laski in 1930/31. The «trip to the moon» of Arab-Jewish co-operation was likewise emphasised by Laski.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the closest friends of Harold Laski were the forward champions of the Zionist cause, like Justice Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter, the two American

politicians diametrically opposed to anything smacking of socialism. We are told that his fight against Sidney Webb was partly in response to a request from Frankfurter. An interesting side to his personality is his frequent description of himself as a «Jew». When accepting, in the name of the Executive, the Poale Zion resolution submitted to the Labour Party Conference of 1943, he declared that he was doing so «as a Jew in the fullest sense of the word». The definition of who is a Jew is a matter which has caused endless controversies, but the dividing line falls roughly between religion and nationalism. As an atheist, Harold Laski could only have meant that he considered Jewishness as a nationality, which is the hub of the Zionist idea. His fullyfledged allegiance was revealed after the Labour victory of 1945 and the adoption of the anti-Zionist line by the Foreign Office. Although he was under the restraint of his chairmanship of the Party, he managed to write letters, lead delegations, publish articles and hold meetings in co-operation with Emanuel Shinwell against the «Attlee-Bevin betrayal of the Jews».

Yet, Harold Laski had never made the Middle East his subject either and had never visited Palestine or the area. He was careful enough to confine his activities to politicizing rather than involving himself as a contributor to the *New Statesman* in any expert article. I could only find casual comments on the Palestine story bearing his signature. His relevance to the *New Statesman* and the Middle East lies in his influence on its staff. Laski's influence on Kingsley Martin began at the London School of Economics when Martin worked as an assistant lecturer under Harold Laski at the Department of Political Science between 1922 and 1927. The relationship proved to be a life-long intellectual partnership in which, according to Hyam's words, Laski became Kingsley Martin's

(5) The writer is indebted in these accounts to the worthy biography by Kingsley Martin, *Harold Laski*, London, 1953.

(6) *Op. Cit.*, p. 210.

(7) *Ibid.*, pp. 208-210.

political mentor.

As Martin himself was uninterested in the Middle East, apart from a sentimental sympathy for the Jewish State, the real work was left to the new wave of Jewish writers flocking to the offices of the *New Statesman* in the aftermath of Hitler's seizure of power over Central Europe. Continental socialism had more than its share of Jewish intellectuals, who became the first target of Nazi wrath. Most of them were anti-Zionists and non-Zionists, but the disillusionment with integration, liberalism, internationalism and socialism, as ignited by Nazi indiscriminate persecution, aroused in their minds second thoughts on Jewish nationalism. Many of the persecuted Jews believed that Palestine was their only refuge. Some of the intellectual refugees, writers and artists, had naturally looked to the British socialist weekly as their rallying mouthpiece, and many of them found their way to No. 10 Great Turnstile.

Their impact on the thinking of the *New Statesman* can be imagined. Even the editor's secretary, who was another recruit from the Jewish German refugees, kicked up a fuss when Kingsley Martin dictated to her an article which showed some thoughtlessness in regard to the plight of the Jews.<sup>8</sup> The editor had never seen displaced Palestinian *fellah* in his office, but he could see there a great man like Arthur Koestler thrown out of his country, all his possessions lost and most of his family liquidated. He would have been a very insensitive writer indeed had he remained unimpressed.

At the same time, the old Jewish writers of the paper who remained so aloof from Jewish nationalist affairs, could no longer maintain their neutral position.

(8) Hynns, p. 180.

Martin's report on Harold Laski's conversion is one outstanding example. Leonard Woolf is another. In his autobiography, Mr. Woolf relates that he was against Zionism and the Jewish National Home because he realised that introducing a minority in the midst of a different majority always created conflict. He was against the Balfour Declaration and neither Chaim Weizmann nor Lewis Namier could win him to their Zionist side. Yet, after the Nazi liquidation of the Jews and the migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Palestine, « Zionism and anti-Zionism became irrelevant ».<sup>9</sup> Hence, Woolf went to visit Israel in 1957 and returned to write laudable things about it. His reference to the attempt of Lewis Namier (Bronstein-Namierski) to win him over to Zionism throws some light on what was going on in the offices. Mr. Namier was also in charge of the foreign affairs articles.

There was also a noticeable change in the readership and advertising of the paper, as the bulk of the intellectual refugees flocked to the middle-of-the-road socialist journal, boosting its sales steadily until it passed the fifty thousand figure after the war. (It stood at 71,684 copies in 1955.) Living in Hampstead and reading the *New Statesman* became the mark of the middle-aged intellectual of German-Jewish origin. The magazine conducted a survey, in 1955, on its readership.<sup>10</sup> The religious and political affiliations (other than party support) were not included in the questionnaire, but the social and economic breakdown throws some light on the composition of the readers. One third of the nine thousand people who replied to the questionnaire earned more

(9) Woolf, L., *The Journey not the Arrival Matters*, Autobiography, vol. 5, London, 1969, pp. 185-6.  
(10) *New Statesmanship, A Survey of the Readership*, New Statesman, 1955.

than £1,000 (in 1955). The following is their professional distribution:

- 17% teachers and professors.
  - 12% civil servants.
  - 11% professional people (doctors, lawyers, etc.)
  - 11% business executives.
  - 11% technicians and scientists.
- Their party allegiance was:
- 58% Labour Party.
  - 4% Liberal Party.
  - 2% Communist Party.

The paper in general was read by neither the working class nor the capitalist class, but rather by the petty bourgeoisie who have formed the backbone of the Zionist movement throughout its history. The preponderance of Labour Party supporters among the nine thousand sample points to a concentration of pro-Israeli readership. The advertising of the paper also follows the same trend, as the bulk of the advertising space of the *New Statesman* is taken up by the small ads and professional and academic announcements. *New Statesman* readers seem to look at themselves as some specific species of animals and coo to each other in their small ads.

The new picture was mirrored in the « letters to the editor » columns. Not until the late thirties did we begin to see any appreciable interest in the Palestine question. There was scarcely a score of letters on the subject throughout the twenties, and very few of them came from Jews. During the White Paper controversy of 1931, there was only one letter published in comment and it was signed by the Vice-President of the Jewish National Fund. The independence of Egypt seemed to occupy the thoughts of the readers more than any other Middle Eastern issue. Nevertheless, no one should get the false

impression, normally and often rightly levelled at the dailies and weeklies, and assume that the *New Statesman* Middle Eastern policy was automatically dictated by its small advertisers, readers, directors or even owners. Its editor dealt with the freedom of the press and wrote, «In this country the newspaper is stronger than any advertising interest and the view that advertisers regularly dictate policy is fallacious.»<sup>11</sup> This somewhat over-optimistic view, modified by the word «regularly», must be inspired by his experience with the *New Statesman*.

We have seen how the paper opposed Sidney Webb's White Paper when most he needed its support. From the very beginning it was agreed to give the editor a free hand in shaping the policies of the magazine. It was printed not as a commercial enterprise but as a missionary message. No attempt was made to attract advertising at the expense of the message and the owners were content to compensate for the annual losses from their own pockets, for two decades, to the tune of £4,000 to £6,500 per year rather than do otherwise.<sup>12</sup> Yet the same generous shareholders could do little to prevail over the editor. George Bernard Shaw's often cited remark in his letter to Israel Zangwill is worth repeating again:

«My dear Mr. Zangwill. You complain that Sharp won't print your letter. That's nothing. You are not a proprietor; I am and he won't print my articles.»

Yet to have your policy dictated is a different matter from having it influenced and we are often prone to confuse the conscious with the unconscious. It is also a basic element of journalism to keep your customers in mind all the time.

(11) Citation in Sinclair, R., *The British Press*, London, 1949, p. 186.

(12) Cole, R., p. 138.

In 1931, the Board of Directors decided to amalgamate the *New Statesman* with *The Nation*, Mr. H.W. Messingham's progressive magazine. The amalgamation did not just give a boost to the circulation but also introduced a new element into the policies of the old paper. Sharp's *New Statesman* was noted for its imperialism as previously discussed, and Shaw was not completely off the mark when he described the editor as «a Tory in grain». In contrast, *The Nation* was anti-imperialist and the amalgamation of the two produced *The New Statesman and Nation* known to my generation as the opponent of Britain's rule over Afro-Asia. This happened to coincide happily with the appointment of Kingsley Martin, who had no stomach for imperialist intrigues, exploitation and domination. Henceforth, partnership with the colonial peoples was the regular policy line. Gunboat diplomacy had been really finished for the *New Statesman*.

Kingsley Martin was a confirmed pacifist and as such hated Britain's military involvements overseas. As another disciple of the London School of Economics, the cost of military commitments was something which he watched carefully and with a worried mind. The established «New Statesmanship» of cost calculations was, therefore, more than upheld under his editorship, a matter which had a considerable effect on the policy of the paper vis-a-vis the Foreign Office and War Office plans for maintaining a chain of military bases across the Middle East and far into the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. The other idealist component of the «New Statesmanship», the belief in the League of Nations and then the United Nations, a typically Anglo-Saxon preoccupation, loomed even more in his deliberations. With the rise of Fascism and its onslaught on the League of Nations, the question was for the first time posed: Should the international organisation, or its members, intervene

with its own armies and enforce its will on the delinquent state? This was more of a perplexing question to a pacifist like Kingsley Martin. The soul-searching dilemma was resolved by him in favour even of bloodshed in the cause of international will and law.

Martin visited Israel many times and every time he visited it he sang high its praises. His pro-Zion sentiments are more transparent in his personal column «London Diary». This was his chief introduction to the paper as soon as he took it over. Unlike the editorials which represented the collective mind of the *New Statesman*, London Diary consisted of brief comments and hearsay episodes presented in a light-hearted personal and casual manner, at the critic's own responsibility and authority. The Diaries were not always written by him but he generally re-wrote them or edited them, and continued to do so until 1961, often assisted by Richard Crossman and Leonard Woolf.<sup>13</sup> Among other writers of this weekly feature was Harold Laski, who together with Martin and his successor, Paul Johnson, utilised the spontaneity of the Diaries to ventilate strong anti-Arab opinions.

Martin was often described as a man of passion, where his beliefs were concerned, and behaved with the dottiness and blindness of the passionate. His love for Israel was one of his passions. Having spent so many of his holidays there, he regretted the fact that Harold Laski had died without doing the same.

«But if he had gone to Israel, he would have seen the dream of his life realised, though imperfectly, and on a small scale. He would have seen a country which was both socialist and freedom-loving.»<sup>14</sup>

(13) Martin, K., *The Editor*, London, 1968, pp. 10-11.

(14) Martin, K., *Harold Laski*, p. 219.

Although Kingsley Martin had resigned in 1961, he continued to serve his paper as an editorial consultant and contributor until he died on 18 February 1969, a few hours before having an interview with President Nasser. It is an irony of fate that he should collapse and die in a Cairo hospital and not in an Israeli kibbutz. His last contribution to the *New Statesman* was carried by the journal on 31 January, on the man whom he admired immensely, Mahatma Gandhi.

## V

## FAREWELL PALESTINE NATION !

FROM 4,075 in 1931, to 9,553 in 1932, 30,327 in 1933, 42,359 in 1934 and 61,854 in 1935 — the figures of Jewish immigration to Palestine went on rising. Hitler was doing it all. Palestine looked to both the anti-Semite who did not want the Jew to come to his own country, and to the philo-Semite who wanted to see a home ready in Palestine in 24 hours to receive an unfortunate Jew. Or so went the story in London. In Jerusalem, the Arabs began to realise that events had more than justified their former fears. The guns were re-loaded and the nights were broken with the sound of fire and the screams of the women. The British Government was racing against time to simplify the problem by giving Palestine some form of a representative council. The proposal was strongly resisted by the Zionist side and those statically minded Arabs who claimed to represent their people acted in a typical manner which could only lead to the abortion of their last chance to have an official say.

Granting the mandated peoples the right to a representative government has been a slogan from which the *New Statesman* hardly shrank. When the paper took the Zionist side during the Passfield Paper controversy, the one thing in which it did not support the Zionists was the Government plan to form a legislative council in Palestine. On 11 April 1936, when the Palestine Government reaffirmed its determination to go ahead with

the plan, the *New Statesman* published an article commenting on the annual estimates of revenue. The article criticised the proposed Legislative Council designed to give the Palestinian Arabs a semi-majority in the Chamber, claiming that the arrangement would create hostility between the two communities. «Liberty and fraternity can only be obtained by equality», viz. by making one Jew equal to two Arabs. (The Arabs then formed two-thirds of the population.)

The name of the writer was not given and the article was simply signed « N.B. », but the cumulative index of the paper gave N.B. as Norman Bentwich, the Zionist spokesman of long standing.

Another unsigned article appeared after the general strike of the Arab workers. The « socialist » paper did not tackle the general strike as a significant proletarian development in a semi-feudal colony, but the writer referred to an opinion that the conflict was one between nationalism and internationalism, i.e. between the right of the native citizens to do what they want with their country and the right of the international community to dispose of anybody's land as found beneficial to mankind as a whole. The nationalism of the Palestinian people, or rather Arab Nationalism in general, was described as just a form of demagoguery influenced and fanned by Italian propaganda. Yet, the primary cause of the trouble, the writer admitted, was the Balfour Declaration. Palestine remained strategically vital for the British Empire and Britain must remain there to honour her obligations. Should Jewish immigration continue at this rate and the Jews become a majority in Palestine, that would be « not a disaster for mankind nor the Arabs ».

The above mentioned article, like most of the other

articles on the subject, persisted in the will-o-the-wisp of Arab-Jewish co-operation. Fifteen years of obvious fiasco in this field passed without one of the *New Statesman's* experts grappling with any practical programme to promote this co-operation. The Zionists, in general, attributed the failure of co-operation to the intrigues or omissions of the British administration. Having again reassured its readers in an editorial article that everything rested on achieving co-operation between the two communities, the paper went on to call on the Government to help by creating joint trade unions. Nobody in the editorial office seemed to have noticed that there were many joint facilities provided by the Government — schools for example — which the *Yishuf* did not want to know about. The editor assured his readers that in this spirit of co-operation, the Zionists were «genuine and persistent».

The editorial comment attracted a few letters. One writer reminded the editor that the *Histadrut* (the Zionist trade union organisation) did not allow the non-Jews to its membership and that the Arabs were «rigorously excluded».

Shortly afterwards, it was Harold Laski's turn to write the London Diary of the 20 June issue. He started by attacking the Government, and warned it that to stop Jewish immigration would be simply an attempt to treat the symptoms and not the cause of the problem. The cause, as he analysed it, was the anti-Jewish prejudice of the British officials, the weakness of the British Government in handling the Palestinians and the feudalism of the Arabs. This was, in fact, the official position of the Jewish Agency.

A few months before the publication of the report of the Peel Commission which recommended the partition

(1) 3 May 1935.

of Palestine, the *New Statesman* carried an article, on 19 September, recommending the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. By then, such a solution was an open secret and Chaim Weizmann himself was consulted on it. For the first time the paper took note of the resurgent Arab nationalism of the Palestinians and wrote:

« Today they (the Arab nationalists) speak as the representatives of the great majority if not the whole, of the Arab population, Moslem and Christian. It is neither here nor there to say that they are deluding their followers, or that the agitation is emotional and not rational. The same things have been said of every nationalistic movement (take Ireland, India and Egypt as examples in our recent history); the movement is none the less real and formidable for that.»

The cherished idea of the « Palestine Nation » is now dropped, and for good. The Arabs and Jews should follow their own tracks in their separate domains.

The report of the Peel Commission<sup>2</sup> was dealt with by Mostyn Lloyd, the paper's sub-editor for international affairs. In an article carried on 17 July 1937, C.M. Lloyd welcomed the recommendation for partition, but he expanded it by arguing that New Jerusalem should also go to the Jewish state. In regard to the other recommendation vis-a-vis the economic absorption criteria, Lloyd supported Chaim Weizmann in his protest against this test applied to the number of permitted Jewish immigrants.

The partition plan, however, proved to be a non-starter and the paper had to content itself with the repeated appeals to the Government to uphold its obligations by keeping Palestine open to Jewish immigration

(2) *Cmd. 5479, 1937.*

regardless of the wishes of the indigenous population. This was the rallying cry for the attack on the 1939 White Paper which restricted the influx of Jewish immigrants to a level which would have prevented them from ever achieving a majority in Palestine. Ben Gurion stated soon after World War II had been declared, that the Jews would fight in the war as if there were no White Paper and fight the White Paper as if there were no war. So did the *New Statesman*. Throughout the war it attacked the embargo, appealed for the free entry of the illegal immigrants and treated the White Paper as a breach of promise, a piece of inhumanity and an illegal document.

This was a time when something more sinister was threatening the very life of the Jews in occupied Europe. The paper turned its eyes closely to the Resistance Movement on which it became an authoritative source on the one hand, and on the other a testimony of faith and hope in the hands of the Resistance fighters as they crouched in their underground hideouts. What the *New Statesman* wrote was translated into the various continental languages and distributed secretly. The result was still a closer appreciation of the plight of Jewry and the menacing possibilities of anti-Semitism. The stories of moving Jewish tragedies and heroism streamed into No. 10 Great Turnstile whilst the attempts to escape and seek a new lease of life in Palestine aroused the sympathy of all the leading papers. When the war ended with thousands of Displaced Persons, it was inevitable, in view of its trend, for the *New Statesman* to champion their cause and see that so-called justice was done for them. There was a new pro-Zionist dimension added to the mind of the editor as he summed up his understanding of the post-war Palestine question in these words:

« For the Jewish people, the return to Palestine was the eternal dream; Zionists had two generations of strenuous work behind them, and since 1918 they had relied on the Labour Party's specific pledge to give reality to the Mandate's obligation to establish a Jewish National Home in Palestine. If ever there was a moment when they might expect priority for their claim, that moment had arrived. Six million European Jews had been murdered in cold blood by Hitler. The remainder had lost their homes, their livelihood, and all prospect of return to a normal existence in Europe. The Arab countries had done little to earn the gratitude of the Western allies in the war...»<sup>3</sup>

The paper made no independent enquiry on the subject and relied in its judgements on the reports and commentaries of its pro-Zionist informers. Who was better placed on this subject than they were? Therefore, it was to Jon Kimche (the ultra-Zionist journalist), Aubrey Eban (later on Abba Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister) and Arthur Koestler, that the paper turned for opinions on the Middle East. The well-recognised, often frenzied enthusiasm of the Zionists made it impossible for any opinion other than theirs to be audibly heard in the international forum. It was only years after the events of 1946/47 that we heard what a little place Palestine had actually occupied in the minds of the Jewish Displaced Persons.<sup>4</sup>

As it happened, the slogan of forging a Palestine Nation of Jews and Arabs was then finally laid in its grave. A Jewish Palestine, or a Jewish part of Palestine became the Middle Eastern «New Statesmanship».

(3) Martin, *Harold Lasky*, p. 206.

(4) For full account of this story see Lillenthal, A.M., *What Price Israel*?, Chicago, 1953.

## VI LABOUR AND THE MIDDLE EAST

THE PRESENT STORY of the *New Statesman* must inevitably lead us to the history of the British Labour Party, as the periodical gradually became more identified with this, if anything, than with Fabianism.

The Labour Party has an uneven history in regard to the Palestine issue. Unlike the Tories and the Liberals, the Labourites had very little to do with the Middle East until 1930. It is true that they did have one minister in the War Cabinet which made the Balfour Declaration, but Mr. George Barnes was by no means an influential member of the Cabinet or particularly interested in the Jewish question. He nevertheless cast his vote in favour of the Declaration without any hesitation.<sup>1</sup> Yet in his autobiography, Barnes interpreted what the British promised as no more than an asylum for the Jews in the Holy Land without giving them «a right to rule the country».<sup>2</sup>

Yet, this expedient act of imperial Britain, casual and insignificant as it seemed to George Barnes, was destined to gather a momentum of its own and generate a pro-Zion sentiment within the British Labour movement. Roughly a month after the issue of the Balfour Declaration, the special conference of the Labour Party approved the War Aims Memorandum which advocated,

(1) According to Weizmann's papers cited in Stein, p. 476.

(2) Barnes, G., *From Workshop to War Cabinet*, London, 1921.

inter alia, the liberation of Palestine from the oppressive government of the Turk in order that the country might «form a free State under international guarantee, to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return and may work out their own salvation free from interference by those of alien race or religion».<sup>3</sup> Indeed, none of the Labour documents compiled by Mr. S. Levenberg in his *Labour Policy on Palestine* went back to a date preceding the issue of the Declaration. However, the War Aims Memorandum was first drafted and circulated in August, some two months before Balfour's formal issue. There had been, in fact, a wind of change already sweeping over the socialist scene, namely, the wind of nationalism. The outbreak of the Great War and the failure of the socialist doctrine to infuse its faithful with sufficient will to stand against the nationalist fervour of their respective warring countries in that great imperialist squabble, dampened the spirit of internationalism, and threw overboard the lofty masts of the Second International which stood so much against the attractions of Zionism among the poorer Jewish masses.

After years of frustration, the hour struck for the Zionists to penetrate the adamant socialist movement. Until then, Zionism was abhorred as a reactionary, imperialist and bourgeois affair, and the three attempts made by *Poale Zion* (the Labour wing of the Zionist movement) to join the International Socialist Bureau were curtly rejected before the war. The collapse of the international spirit paved the way for *Poale Zion* during the war to penetrate first the Dutch and Scandinavian socialist parties. In Britain, the Jewish National Labour Council was created and managed to recruit sixteen Jewish trade unions by the end of the war.<sup>4</sup> In 1917, the

Stockholm Peace Manifesto of the Delegations of Neutral Socialist Parties was issued, calling for, among other things, autonomy for the Jewish communities wherever they happened to be. It also called for the protection of Jewish colonisation in Palestine. The Second International, by then a defunct organisation, welcomed *Poale Zion* to its ranks. Undoubtedly, the socialist movement had been affected by the anti-Semitic outrages of the First World War as it was more recently affected during the Second World War.

The new position gave many a rostrum to the Zionist spokesmen in the expansive arena of the labour movement, and they used their opportunities to the full. Since then, the labour parties of Europe and America have generally sympathised with the aspirations of the Jewish National Home and Israel. The disproportionate representation of the Jewish communities in such fraternal parties, understandable from any group suffering from racial or religious prejudice and sometimes persecution, helped in influencing their policies on the Jewish national question.

The British Labour Party received an added impetus from the fact that it was Britain who promised the Jews a home in Palestine, and it was Britain who occupied Palestine and received its Mandate on the basis of underwriting the Jewish National Home. To the British Labour Party, *Poale Zion* affiliated itself as the «Jewish Socialist Labour Party», to which many prominent members of the Labour Party belonged. Practically in every annual conference, one member or another of *Poale Zion* (like Mr. Maurice Rosette, Mr. Kaplansky and Mr. Pomeranz, to name a few) submitted or seconded a pro-Zion resolution. Such resolutions were always passed, often unani-

(3) Text in Levenberg, S., *Labour Policy on Palestine*, London, 1938.

(4) Goodman, P., *Zionism in England*, London, p. 46, 1949.

mously and sometimes even «without discussion».<sup>5</sup> Typical is the unadvised manner in which the National Executive secured the adoption by the 1944 Party Conference of the famous resolution which included such far-reaching words as «Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in». The Jewish leaders, including Ben Gurion, had to dissociate themselves from it.<sup>6</sup>

Some delegates often spoke violently against the Arabs. The Palestinian «insurgents» were described as «terrorists» and «feudal landlords». Henry Snell (later Lord Snell), at one time the Fabian Secretary of the London School of Economics and an associate of Harold Laski, put the whole responsibility for the Palestine impasse and the 1929 riots upon the head of the Mufti and the Arabs when he represented the Labour Party in the 1930 Royal Commission on Palestine. A similar story may be traced in regard to the trade union movement. In the field of information, the Palestine Labour Studies Group militated for the cause. In one of its tracts, Dr. A. Schwadron dealt with the Arab opposition under the title «Arab Imperialism».

For a good many years, the official line of the Party, however, remained cautious, as Leonard Stein described it — or indeterminate, as Christopher Sykes would have it. Another early document on this question was the letter which was addressed by Ramsay MacDonald to the Jewish workers in Palestine on 3 March 1922. «The success of Palestine», the Labour leader wrote, «depends upon the development of *Palestinian* life and on the participation in this great work both of Jews and Arabs».<sup>7</sup>

(5) Levenberg, *British Labour Policy on Palestine*; also Levenberg, *The Jews and Palestine*, London, 1945.

(6) Sykes, C., *Cross Roads to Israel*, London, 1965, p. 312.

(7) Citation in Levenberg, *British Labour Policy on Palestine*, p. 125.

*Palestinian life* is evocative of the *Palestine nation* of the *New Statesman*.

Against the massive pro-Zionist influence on socialist thought, there was a small Arab voice, indeed no Arab voice, to counteract it. Reminiscing about the Passfield controversy already dealt with above, Beatrice Webb wrote:

«Roused by the tragic happenings in Palestine there have buzzed around him Jews and the admirers of Jews, great and small, in a state of violent grief and agitation demanding revenge and compensation. It is noteworthy that no representative of the Arabs — not even a casual admirer of the Arabs — has appeared on the scene.

«I admire Jews and dislike Arabs. But the Zionist movement seems to me a gross violation of the right of the native to remain where he was born and his father and grandfather were born — if there is such a right. To talk about the return of the Jews to the land of their inheritance after an absence of 2000 years seems to me sheer nonsense and hypocritical nonsense.»<sup>8</sup>

The second paragraph is quoted to point to the other, older school of socialist thought which frowned on nationalism. To this leftist school, another faction of right-wing labour members was sporadically joined to create the anti-Zionist groupings of the Labour Party. It so happened that the future of Palestine twice fell into the hands of such groups, first when Sidney Webb became Colonial Secretary and second when Ernest Bevin became Foreign Secretary. Both were naturally accused of anti-Semitism.

The anti-Zionist right-wing was galvanized towards

(8) *Diaries*, p. 217.

the end of World War II when Britain became heavily in debt and needed all the resources of the empire to keep her going. The Foreign Secretary estimated that the living standard of the British people would drop by 25% if they were forced to abandon the Middle East. Yet it was Britain's future in this area which became seriously threatened. Her military staff evolved their plans around the idea of keeping a military presence on both sides of Sinai. The perpetuation of the British rule over Palestine and influence in Egypt and Iraq became integral parts of this strategy. Winning the good will of the Arabs was necessary, not only for such a regional arrangement, but also for the flow of the valuable, yet cheap, Arab oil. It was unfortunate for the Labour Party to find itself burdened with such a strategy just when the Zionists wanted Palestine most. The clash became unavoidable.

On the other side of the Labour Party, there emerged a leftist faction around the «Keep Left Group» of which Richard Crossman was a leading spokesman and the *New Statesman* a valuable platform. In international affairs, the group called for the liquidation of the imperialist framework, and cooperation with, rather than suspicion of, the Soviet Union. The oligarchies, rajahs, pashas and sheikhs were vehemently attacked. «Ever since 1918», Richard Crossman, the leading exponent, wrote in 1956 in the *New Statesman*, «The Foreign Office had found that the cheapest way to run the Middle East and safeguard our oil supplies was to maintain the dynasties and ruling cliques and play them off against each other by a judicious mixture of bullying and appeasement». Crossman was therefore forced to engage in a long feud with Ernest Bevin as far back as 1945 and lose no opportunity to assail Bevin's subservience to American capitalism and adherence to such reactionary concepts as the British Empire. It was such slogans which attracted the

left-wing intellectuals of the Arab world to the *New Statesman*.

That was the time when the Zionist organisation was changing horses. As it had shifted its weight from Berlin to London with the rise of England's star, it now shifted from London to Washington with the rise of America's star. The opposition of the Foreign Secretary to the demands of the Jewish Agency to admit the Jewish Displaced Persons to Palestine was, therefore, answered by the one war cry of the *Yishuf*, «Down with British Imperialism!» All those who wanted to see British imperial domination over the Middle East brought to an end appreciated the value of the *Yishuf* cry from the Kremlin to Holborn. Thus, an additional bridge between Zionism and the left was built.

The Arab governments, on the other hand, were content to see their lands garrisoned by the British Army and their skies dominated by the RAF. For years, they had remained unable to recognise the Soviet Union, and had only established diplomatic relations with Moscow during the war at the behest of their British advisers. Marxism and socialism were treated as criminal blasphemies punishable by death. Many parts were still ruled by sultans and mediaeval autocrats. They certainly had nothing to show comparable with the *Kibbutzim*, the *Histadrut*, the *Va'ad Leumi* and the various experiments in collectivisation and communal life, whose superficial manifestations appeared so commendable to western liberal eyes.

As outlined above, Kingsley Martin was critical of the British Empire and suspicious of its overseas military commitments. His paper pointed out in 1947 that Palestine was costing the Treasury £100 million a year.

Britain, the editor observed, was no longer capable of shouldering such burdens and the only thing left for her was to pack up her military bases and invite the United States to take some of the responsibilities of the Middle East in return for a share in the minerals of the area, which American capital was willy-nilly going to carve up. The Soviet Union could not be kept out of the area for ever either. To sum up, a new Middle East must be created, or be allowed to create itself. Not through the same glasses did the Foreign Office look at the map, and the wedge between the Labour Government and the *New Statesman* stuck fast.

The serious quarrel erupted over the admittance of the Jewish refugees to Palestine. Leaving the imperialist issue aside, the Attlee Government found itself bound by the 1939 White Paper which had severely restricted the entry of the Jews, whereas the *New Statesman* had never treated the paper as a legal document. Furthermore, the journal found the Government in breach of the long standing commitment of the Labour Party to the cause of Zion. In this respect, the Attlee-Bevin axis was pitifully undermined by the 1944 resolution. With the approval of the United Nations General Assembly of the partition recommendation, the paper was left with nothing but to throw its entire weight behind the Zionist effort.

## VII PARTITION

AS THE HOUR of reckoning drew nearer, a series of articles were carried by the *New Statesman*, and likewise by all other periodicals, on the Arab-Zionist conflict and the Middle East as a whole. Although the paper represented the non-imperialist school of labour and voiced the opinion of the Keep Left Group,<sup>1</sup> the interests of Britain remained something sacred. Maurice Edelman M.P., the friend and biographer of Ben Gurion, published two articles on 5 & 12 July 1947 on «Oil and the Middle East.» His concluding article affirmed, «to retain a proper share of Middle East oil, and not let either the U.S.A., Russia or the Arab States crowd us out, must be a principal objective of our policy».

Russia's chances of crowding Britain out were assessed in another article, «The Arab World and Russia», commissioned from the Arab expert on the Middle East, Professor Albert Hourani. Where the paper differed from the Attlee-Bevin group was in the matter of ways and means. A thorough review of the situation was made on 24 May 1947 under the heading of «Mr. Bevin and the Middle East», in which the paper argued with the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, and his colleagues on the essential need for the Arab world and its resources. The question, the writer asked, was whether Bevin's policy of maintaining a military presence in the area weakened

(1) It was reported that Aneurin Bevan flirted with the idea of taking over the journal at one stage.

or strengthened British interests. After discussing Britain's military capacities, the article came to the conclusion that Britain could not shoulder the tasks involved. A gradual withdrawal would be the wisest thing to do, but it would be commendable if the great powers could bring themselves to agree on preventing aggression in the area and raising the level of the indigenous peoples. Towards the latter aim, the Euphrates Valley Authority and the Jordan Valley Authority (a pet Zionist project) might be developed. As far as Palestine was concerned Britain should withdraw forthwith, otherwise the military cost of the country would wipe out all the oil revenues reaped by Britain from Iraq and Persia for many years. It was a «Statesmanish» essay in true form.

The call for the withdrawal of the British Army became an official *New Statesman* line in an editorial which described, on 19 July 1947, the attempt to stay in Gaza as a ruinous policy. But the paper remained imperialistic in its final reckoning and may be quite safely described as an early pioneer of what is now called neo-colonialism. Although no military presence should be arranged in Gaza, Britain still had interests in the area in view of the rumoured possibility of discovering oil there. Gaza should therefore be put «nominally» under King Abdullah<sup>2</sup> — the protégé of Britain.

On 3 May 1947, the Palestine question was discussed on its own in another unsigned article. The writer saw the conflict as one between the great powers and which would be solved on that basis, regardless of the Arab *fellahin* and the Jewish refugees. America did not want to carry the burden and was therefore disposed to give the British a loan to do just that. The Labour Government

(2) Editorial on 13 November 1948.

itself had no desire to give Palestine to the Arabs but to keep it safe for Britain. America, therefore, would be delighted to see her ally in this situation and thus start «booing the British from the side lines». The Government should not be taken in and must hasten to withdraw, whatever the United Nations might or might not decide. The only practical solution actually left was to divide the country, either by an illegitimate partition through the might of the Jewish *Haghana* or by a legitimate partition approved and supported by the international community.

One of the few articles which was published under Richard Crossman's name before the establishment of Israel was carried by the *New Statesman* on 4 January. The article, entitled «Silver Imperialism», revealed a deep knowledge of the inner deliberations and organisation of Zionist policy-making, but Mr. Crossman reached the strange conclusion that American Jewish pressure was being brought to bear on the Zionist leaders so as to make the Jewish National Home an extension of American Jewish influence. Therefore, Britain should forestall that by co-operating with the Jewish leaders in Palestine, namely Ben Gurion, Weizmann and Shertock, and treat them «as Ministers of a Jewish State in part of Palestine».

Britain finally referred its Mandate to the United Nations as the successor to the League of Nations, and Mr. Crossman became a member of the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, which recommended the partition of the country. This was approved by the U.N. General Assembly after some considerable American pressure put on those states which fell within the American sphere of influence, mainly the Latin American countries. The *New Statesman* ventured to attack the BBC for repeating the same allegation on the air and went on to advise the British Government to implement

the U.N. decision in an orderly manner:

«Mr. Bevin can so organise the evacuation as to assist the two nations in establishing the machinery of government in their respective areas. On the other hand, he can so organise it as to intensify confusion. In the former case he will, in fact, be imposing partition at the very last moment and in the most difficult circumstances; in the latter, he will be destroying Palestine, presumably in the hope of thereby winning the approval of the Arab League. That this hope is vain is proved by the statement of the Secretary General condemning British pusillanimity in the strongest terms.»<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Bevin's reluctance to follow any course that might have brought an orderly hand to the proceedings intensified the paper's feud with the Foreign Office. Its projected plans for the Arab world came under fire in an article published, on 13 March 1948, under the heading « Anglo-Arab Treaties ». The writer accused the British Government of putting down the Kurdish revolt in Iraq and sacrificing the interests of Britain everywhere for no other reason than to curry favour with the Arabs and win their approval. This, the writer concluded, was a forlorn hope. The *New Statesman* was quite correct on the last mentioned point. As a witness on this particular stage, the present writer remembers that there was a much stronger feeling against British Imperialism, at least in Iraq, than against Zionism, and it is very much doubted that the Arabs in general would have accepted the exploitation of the oil companies and the presence of the British soldiers in return for British help in Palestine.

Bevin's uncertainty in his thesis, and the destruction of his Anglo-Iraqi friendship treaty which must have

(3) 6 December 1947.

shaken his confidence, contributed to his confused handling of the issue. The *New Statesman* itself could not see its way clearly in the muddle which prevailed until the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war in May 1948. The paper did not believe Mr. Bevin in his resolve to pull out of Palestine. This was bluffing. As Britain was going to stay there, it should use its army to defeat the forces of the Mufti and impose on the Arabs the U.N. partition. Britain should also prevent the Arab Legion of Transjordan from intervening. The only obstacle to peace, the paper reiterated yet again, was the British advisors who did not allow Abdullah to negotiate peace with Ben Gurion.

In another article, the journal called on Britain to withdraw and leave the Arabs and Jews to partition the country *de facto*. The Jews would then negotiate with the Arabs a final settlement. In other instances, an international police force was envisaged to supervise the withdrawal and enforce the U.N. partition. Part of the confused approach to the method might have been also due to the paper's uncertainty in regard to the military balance. It seems to have underestimated the power of the Jews, like most other observers, and judged that the *Yishuv* would be able to defend their own part, but not indefinitely.

The outbreak of the official war put the *New Statesman* solidly behind the *Haghanah*; the war was likened to the Spanish Civil War; the Jews with the Republicans; Ben Gurion with Churchill. The Palestinians were described by Crossman as pilferers demolishing « as thoroughly as Arabs in the past demolished Roman cities and crusader castles ». In reviewing Koestler's *Promise and Fulfillment*, Leonard Woolf called on the British Government to espouse the cause of Israel and give up

the Arabs' «dead horse».

A more important ingredient of this partiality was the data sources. Coverage of the British parliamentary debates was left to Maurice Edelman. Field reports from the Middle East were taken from Jon Kimche and Richard Crossman. Out of the four articles published for Kimche, three were on Israel and one on Syria. During the first flare up of the war, the paper had three despatches on the progress of hostilities from correspondents on the Zionist side; none came from the Arab side.

Soon after the ceasefire, Crossman travelled to Palestine and sent a series of despatches in which he described Israel as the only socialist state and a Middle Eastern Switzerland. He advised the British Government to look at the Jewish State as an ally in the work of reconstructing the Middle East and combating communism. He summed up the position of the Government of Ben Gurion as quite generous in regard to the borders, provided that Britain would leave Jordan and allow Israel to develop the Fertile Crescent.

During the 1947-8 crucial months, no Arab or friend of the Arabs was allowed to put the opposite view to the readers of the *New Statesman*. There were at the time in London at least two Arab scholars of some prominence, namely, Edward Atiyah and Albert Hourani. But the commentary on the Arab world was left to Abba Eban. Albert Hourani, however, was invited to write on the dangers of communism and Soviet penetration threatening the Arabs. But the paper was more than fair in its publication of letters to the editor. Strangely enough there were only nine letters in 1947 dealing specifically with the Palestine question as such. Three of them supported the Arab side and two the Zionist side. There

was also a long letter to a parent of a British soldier in Palestine, written by Arthur Koestler with highly emotive words.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Koestler declared in this letter that he supported the terrorist activities of the Zionist underground organisations against the British servicemen in Palestine, and went on to explain his support by telling the story of his own family and the German gas chambers. The letter aroused many comments. Two letters criticising Koestler's analysis were published, so was a brief letter by Edward Atiyah putting the Arab point of view.

The fighting ended with the collapse of the Arab armies, and the *New Statesman* hailed the triumphs of the *Haghana* and the Israeli armed forces. Many lands allocated by the United Nations to the Arabs were conquered and occupied by the Israelis. The paper told the British Government, on 27 November, not to complain if the Jews decided to remain in those territories and hold on to the status quo. The Bernadotte plan, initiated by the United Nations as a settlement, strongly resisted by the Israelis, was dead and the only thing left for Britain was to sign with Israel a treaty of alliance (13 November). Otherwise, the paper maintained sealed lips on the question of the borders throughout the weeks in which the question was heatedly discussed and contested. The exodus of the Palestinian refugees was pleasantly mentioned in one editorial as one of Israel's victories. The final armistice agreements which planted the very seeds of perennial bloodshed and periodic wars, were welcomed and their author, Dr. R. Bunche, congratulated. The agreements added some five thousand square kilometers to Israel in excess of what the United Nations had allocated for it. The editorial comments on the settlement mentioned the refugees at the bottom of the

---

(4) 16 August 1947.

column in a paragraph of eighteen lines.

The attitude of the *New Statesman* towards the United Nations deserves some attention at this juncture. As mentioned in the preceding pages, respect for international law and authority and solidarity with the League of Nations remained basic tenets of the «New Statesmanship». The editor, Kingsley Martin, went as far as to opt for the use of violence in enforcing the authority of the League of Nations rather than see any state flouting its resolutions. In the era of the United Nations, the *New Statesman* followed the same line and censured any country acting in violation of the international will.

Part of its argument against the Arabs was that they were defying the U.N. decision to divide Palestine. In the aftermath of the war, it was Israel's turn to violate the decision and seize lands which were not allotted to her, a matter which has never been legalised by the U.N. The General Assembly also voted for the return of the refugees to their former homes in a resolution whose renewal has become an annual routine procedure. The *New Statesman* for the first time found itself compelled to turn its back on its cherished faith. It treated the ceasefire border settlement as final and the U.N. compromise plan of Count Bernadotte as irrelevant. On the refugees it said that, with the exception of the land-owning farmers, they should all be resettled in the Arab countries.<sup>5</sup> The comment on the Jerusalem status is perhaps the worst instance of succumbing to Zionist influence. The Holy City was singled out by the U.N. partition resolution to go under U.N. administration as an international enclave. (Many people still believe that this ought to have been the case, and indeed that it ought to be now in view of the

(5) 23 April 1949.

inherently international significance of the city.) The internationalist paper, however, wrote in its editorial of 23 April that the United Nations could not protect the holy places better than the two respective states. This was a position to which we soon became accustomed. Whenever the United Nations voted against Israel (and there are over 70 U.N. resolutions standing against Israel<sup>6</sup> — probably the highest figure for any country) the *New Statesman* found something wrong with the United Nations. This was made more explicit after the 1967 war as we shall discuss later.

(6) A brief study of these resolutions is given in *The United Nations and the Palestine Question*, Arab League Office, London, 1970.

## VIII THE SUEZ AFFAIR

EACH of the three aggressors in the 1956 invasion against Egypt had reasons for the war extending far beyond the nationalization of the Suez Canal. France had its trouble with Egypt's support for the Algerians; Britain had its frustrations in Baghdad, Amman and Arabia on account of Nasser; Israel had its shipping blocked by Egypt. During the 1955 election, Ben Gurion made the opening of the Gulf of Aqaba his platform. He won and became premier. A frenzied campaign for the acquisition of arms was then launched and plans for the invasion of Sinai were brought up to date. Kingsley Martin soon visited Tel Aviv and returned with fresh ideas on the Middle East. In his London Diary, he condemned any supply of arms to Egypt. «We seem to be within smelling distance of the old merchants of death», he wrote in his true pacifist vein.<sup>1</sup> But a different story came from his pen in a signed article, «Can Israel Survive?» in which the chief editor called for a speedy supply of arms to the Jewish State. He summed up the opinions of the Israeli politicians whom he met and concluded that there was going to be war. Israel was still flourishing, but the Arab blockade was undermining its economy and must be brought to an end.<sup>2</sup> Martin's call for the armament of Israel was reaffirmed in another article which appealed for the maintenance of peace in the area by maintaining

---

(1) 28 January 1956.

(2) 7 January 1956.

an arms balance through satisfying Israel's requirements of arms. By this date, Gaitskell was elected as leader of the Labour Party and the writer hastened to congratulate him and praise his good qualities, among which were «the way he harried the Government over the supply of arms to Egypt». The article also called for withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact and an invitation to the Soviet Union to share the responsibility for the maintenance of peace in the Middle East.

The Baghdad Pact was a variation on the Bevinite theme of alliance with the Arabs against communism. Such an alliance, the Foreign Office deemed, was impossible whilst the Arabs remained as bitter as ever about Israel. Anthony Eden, therefore, projected an Arab settlement with the Jewish state based on some border readjustments including a corridor between Egypt and Jordan, and the compensation or return of the refugees. Eden's peace was consequently resisted by Tel Aviv and with it the Baghdad Pact, its *raison d'être*, was criticised. Eden's ideas found echoes in one despatch from Jordan published by the *New Statesman*. Its Jewish writer, Naomi Mitchison, described the plight of the Palestinian refugees and held the Zionists as the accomplices. Peace, the correspondent observed, could only be achieved by allowing some of the refugees to go back to their former homes, paying compensation to the others, and amending the existing ceasefire lines, in return for a partial opening of the borders.

This was a freak article. In general, the magazine maintained an opinion diametrically opposed to that of the Foreign Office. The Baghdad Pact was attacked, so was Britain's wishful thinking to appease the Arabs at the expense of Israel. Britain's reliance on the royalist regimes was scorned in the same breath as the royalist

regimes' dependence on the advice of the Foreign Office. During the same period, the paper also voiced its strongest attack on the deeds of the French Government — «the Government by Piracy» as it called it — in North Africa. It appealed to the socialists of Britain to apply pressure on their French colleagues to solve the Algerian problem with courage.

Against this background, the more progressive Arab states, mainly Egypt, received the blessings of the paper. In a long article which Mr. Crossman wrote in comment on the Suez crisis, he summed up his attitude to what was soon known as Nasserism. Under the heading «Suez: The Lesson for Socialists», he wrote, on 8 September:

«Why was it possible for Labour to quit India with a stroke of pen and not the Middle East? It is because in India there was overt colonialism. In the Middle East it is covert, insidious, through dynasties and ruling cliques, through a mixture of bullying and appeasement. This would collapse if Britain withdrew. It obstructed development of democracy. The Junta of Egypt challenged the set up. Is Nasser a Nazi, a fascist, a communist or a democrat? The same question could be asked about Kemal. The answer is that both men were ready to accept ideas, money and arms from any quarter in order to modernise their countries, raise their living standards and free them from western imperialism... The Foreign Office attitude to Nasser has been the traditional mixture of threats and appeasement. When he remained quiet, his demands were disregarded. When he made a moderate nuisance of himself, his demands were conceded.»

Crossman went on to describe the Western, or rather the Labour, position vis-a-vis Nasser as one of ambiva-

lence. They welcomed his break with a corrupt and decadent past but they were afraid of his totalitarianism and threats to Israel. They wanted to help his regime which for the first time for centuries had shown concern for the *fellah*, «but we are doubtful whether Nasser may not forget his social goals and merely try to create a phoney kind of Egyptian Empire». To get rid of the ambivalence, he advised, they had to ask themselves whether Britain was in charge of the Arabs or of guiding them to democracy. This was too late. Britain must withdraw completely as a matter of socialist principle and «safeguard the oil». Yet, oil should be allowed to nationalise with Britain retaining its marketing. Nasser should also be allowed to have his Suez Canal and the best thing for Britain to do would be to settle with him.

Crossman's key word in summing up the attitude of his socialist colleagues' «ambivalence» has been the quality often attributed to them by the Arabs, but the Arabs, having no equivalent in their language to «ambivalence», called it «double standard». They maintain that British socialists may oppose any racial policy, territorial aggrandisement or defiance of the U.N., except when it is effected by Israel. Nothing should be accepted if it is disadvantageous to her. Thus it was that Ian Mikardo had to go out of his way to explain that his opposition to Ben Gurion's onslaught on Sinai was done in the interests of Israel.

A slight taint of ambivalence appeared in a different article by G.D.H. Cole: «Midway Thoughts on Suez». He started his article by reaffirming his position as an international socialist. Nasser, he said, had the right, according to international law, to nationalise the Suez Canal. Where he went wrong was in denying the Canal to Israeli shipping. The crisis, however, was not related to

the Canal, but to the vengeance of France because of Algeria, the vindictiveness of Britain because of the Baghdad Pact and the fear of the West from the supply of Soviet arms and the penetration of the Soviet Union into the area. Simultaneously, there was a nationalist movement rising in the Middle East against the West. Socialists should support this movement because it was struggling against imperialism, but they should also watch it in case it turned to aggression and xenophobia. Dealing with the question of Israel he wrote:

«It is easy to see why the nationalists of the Middle East acutely dislike having the independent State of Israel planted in their very midst on territory they have been accustomed to regard as their own by virtue of long occupancy. It is easy to see why they would dislike the Israeli State even if their feelings were not exacerbated to positive hatred by the presence among them of the unfortunate refugees who have been driven from their lands and reduced to the extreme of poverty to make way for Jewish immigrants — whose past sufferings have been in many cases no worse than their own. It is any rate arguable, in view of the foreseeable consequences, that the independent State of Israel ought not to have been set up; but it is beyond all question that the powers which did set it up — and especially Britain, in view of the Balfour Declaration — are under a strong moral obligation to maintain it, and not to do any deal with the Arab states at its expense».

The plight of the unfortunate refugees, however, must not be solved at the expense of the Israeli state, but at the expense of the others. Once they were settled somewhere else, the way might be paved for a federation in which Israel could enjoy autonomy. A new canal and more oil pipelines could then be opened across Israel. In

the meantime, if the Arabs received arms, arms should also be supplied to Israel. « My conclusion is that socialists must acquiesce in no settlement with Egypt that does not assure the opening of the Canal to vessels of all nations; and that, in order to make possible a settlement that does, they must insist on effective steps being taken to settle the refugees and must guarantee to Israel whatever arms necessary for its defence».<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to see the connection between supplying Israel with arms and a settlement that gives her the right to use the Canal unless the meaning was to use the arms for securing such a right. Ben Gurion could see no other logic and used the arms accordingly. The international socialist then swung to the other side of his ambivalent mind and condemned Israel for doing that. G.D.H. Cole was unwittingly echoing the chorus of «Arms for Israel» which swept over the *New Statesman* and the Western press in general at the time. Yet, this position must be understood in conjunction with the repeated declarations of the Arab politicians to remove Israel from the map. The *New Statesman* was convinced of these premises. «The country whose existence is threatened by a Middle East dispute is Israel. Her leaders kept a prudent silence. They do not want war, even though it might overthrow Nasser.» The socialists here suffered from two information vacuums. The first was related to their scanty knowledge of the Middle East, its inter-Arab squabbles and characteristic schism between word and deed. The second was related to ignorance of things military, something from which idealists have always suffered.

The question of Egypt's right to nationalize the Suez Canal was therefore converted by the *New Statesman* to

(3) 27 October 1956.

a question of Israel's right to use the Canal. There was no conflicting opinion in the paper about the sovereignty of Nasser's action. In an article entitled «The Logic of Suez», the paper warned Britain against an attempt at a showdown with Cairo. Britain's opposition to Nasser rallied the Arabs against the British who made no effort to win the good will of the Arab middle class, which had become well organized and very strong in Iraq. The lower classes simultaneously considered Britain responsible for their misery and for establishing Israel. It was useless to pour money into the area because « nationalism is stronger than self-interest». The only thing left was to pull out the British forces voluntarily, a recourse manifestly preferable to a hasty evacuation conducted in panic and bitterness. A different arrangement could then be made with the Arabs on an economic basis.

On 29 September 1956, the paper harked on « The Opportunity to Negotiate ». Thanks to the Labour Party, the writer said, Britain was restrained from the use of force. Now it was the task of Labour to press for negotiations on the basis of four points:

1. Submitting the dispute to the International Court of Justice, if it was found illegal.
2. No force should be used by Britain.
3. No talks to be held with Nasser on the basis of presenting him with terms.
4. The eventual agreement must include the right of Israel to use the Canal.

Crossman advised the Government to settle on the basis of Nehru's proposals. It was the influence, according to Paul Johnson, of Mr. Crossman as the Labour Middle East expert, which corrected Gaitskell's course

into an anti-imperialist bearing towards Suez.<sup>4</sup> But the paper returned to the question of «How to Settle with Nasser» in another unsigned article carried on 6 October. The important issue, the article said, was the protection of the Canal user's right to use the Canal. It was, therefore, right that Nasser should negotiate a new agreement, which guaranteed Egypt's sovereignty over the Canal, with the Suez Canal Users' Association. In such an agreement Britain should ensure that Israel received the right to use the international waterway.

Throughout this time, with the peace-inclined Moshe Sharett eased out of his premiership, the Ben Gurion Government was edging its way carefully to war. A massive «reprisal» raid was launched against the Egyptian positions in Gaza a week after Ben Gurion became Defence Minister in February 1955. Some forty officers and soldiers were killed and the embarrassed Egyptian leadership was forced to act. The *fedayeen* squads were then organised: just what the Ben Gurion faction was looking for. The series of raids and counter-raids reached a pitch in the summer of 1956. Ian Mikardo visited Tel Aviv in October 1956, just after the Israeli forces had made another massive raid, but on Jordan this time. Mikardo sent the *New Statesman* his article, «Israel's Crisis», in which he explained that the Israeli attack was not a forerunner of an invasion on Egypt, as other observers had suggested, but a result of the British policy to encourage the Arabs in carving up Israel. After a long discussion on this basis, he appealed to his readers to focus their attention not on the Egyptian front but on Jordan where the Iraqis were encouraged by Britain to send some reinforcements and threaten the security of Israel. He went on to emphasise that when Ben Gurion

(4) Johnson, P., *The Suez War*, London, 1957, p. 51.

considered war with the Arabs from the human angle, he «spoke from the heart and from a deep understanding of his people». As long as the Iraqis kept out of Jordan, Mikardo reassured us, Israeli guns would remain silent.<sup>5</sup>

In the same issue, the paper dealt with the crisis of Jordan in its leader, and warned Britain not to interfere to protect the Western bank of the Jordan if Israel occupied it, or impose any economic blockade on Israel. «We cannot acquiesce in the extinction of Israel, the one Middle Eastern state to share our values. Equally we cannot condone the *policy of territorial aggression which Israel may be forced to adopt* if she is to survive.» The words in italics are a peculiar arrangement for stating a simple fact. All in all, the citation is another sample of ambivalence. Israel's territorial aggression could not be condoned but no one should step in the way and prevent her, not even by economic sanctions.

The writer went on to elaborate by saying that Israel might be compelled to move as long as the Arabs refused to sign a peace treaty, resettle the refugees on their own lands and stop infiltrating Israel. It was not enough for Britain to base its policy on upholding the ceasefire. She must stop trying to curry favour with the Arabs as Eden had tried to do in his Guildhall speech.<sup>6</sup> The Arabs must be «forced» to accept peace treaties! «In the past we believed that a just settlement in Palestine and the maintenance of Britain's position in the Middle East were incompatible. We are beginning to realise that they are inseparable.» In its ideas and terminology, the article bears an unmistakable mark of the «hawks» of Mapai.

The Israeli forces eventually pulled the rug from

(5) 20 October.

(6) The speech in which he called for some concessions from Israel in return for peaceful settlement with the Arabs.

underneath all the well-wishers and defenders of Israel, when they struck into Sinai all along the Egyptian border on 29 October, during an encouragingly quiet period. Many people had been expecting such a strike for some time but the *New Statesman* seemed to have been genuinely taken by surprise. With all its to-ing and fro-ing to Tel Aviv and its numerous advisers on Israeli affairs, the attack came to it like rape to a Trappist nun. «This journal», the editor wrote, «has supported Israel through good times and bad. But we cannot support Israel in her present action or rejoice when we try to estimate its long term consequences.» The attack «destroyed its moral position». By the time the paper went to press, Britain and France had already issued their ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to keep ten miles off the Suez Canal. The editor denounced them in these words: «The world will condemn Britain, and justly so, for a crime not merely against Egypt, but against the whole edifice of international law which has been so arduously reconstructed out of the ruins of Nazi aggression». The ultimatum handed to Nasser was judged by the editor as «calculated to aid Israel at the expense of her victim».

A bigger shock came to the *New Statesman* with the declared policy of the Israeli victors to annex the conquered territories outright. The critic (*London Diary*) commented on the new situation with foreboding. «Sympathy with Israel's case — their act of aggression was really provoked — will be rapidly dissipated if Ben Gurion goes on boasting of a glorious military victory and declaring that, whatever the U.N. says, no foreign troops will be allowed to interfere in Israel's territorial gains.» Israel must withdraw and the United Nations resolution on the matter fully and unconditionally carried out. «Obedience to the United Nations must come

first for Israel as well as Britain.»

The truth is that not only did the *New Statesman* receive a numbing shock, but so did the labour parties of the Western world. Many socialists, including some Israelis, who support the cause of the Palestinians now and oppose Zionism, trace their anti-Zionist enlightenment to those fateful days when the Israelis joined hands with the Anglo-French imperialists in an attempt to subjugate Egypt once more and topple the Arab revolution. Those were embarrassing days for the *New Statesman* and the writers who assured its readers of Israel's peaceful intentions. The journal was too deeply committed to the cause of Israel «through good times and bad» to allow room for a similar enlightenment to overwhelm it.

If Kingsley Martin was accused of stubbornness in holding on to doubtful courses which he happened to accept, this might be one example to cite. The one way left for the paper was to lie low and avoid mention of Israel until the storm passed over.

The 1956 war, in contrast to the 1948 war and the 1967 war, was characterised in the *New Statesman* by the absence of any despatches from the field. Although Paul Johnson mentioned briefly Israel's complicity in the adventure in his book, the *New Statesman* omitted the role of Israel in its treatment of the subject. Its 10 November editorial hastened to conclude: «The blunt truth is that the invasion was planned by Britain and France three months ago». No mention of Israel. In his *London Diary*, Mr. Martin referred to the subject twice only and a third time in connection with the expulsion of Jews from Egypt, the most «Hitlerite action» yet taken by Nasser. The expulsion was presented as if it was directed against all Jews and not simply against the

subjects of Britain and France regardless of their religion.

The same reticence on the involvement of Israel was reflected in the correspondence columns. During the same period which witnessed two major international crises, Suez and Hungary, the correspondence on Hungary occupied more than twice the space taken by the Suez affair. Most of the letters which were published on Suez condemned the parts played by Britain and France but not Israel. Within the two months which followed the Israeli invasion, i.e., November and December, there was one letter from a Chinese reader in Hong Kong referring to the affair as a collusion between Britain, France and Israel. Against this single letter, there were four defending the Israeli side. Sadie Morris dwelt at some length on the «injustices» and threats encountered by the Jewish State, whilst Israel Cohen (ex-publicity officer of the Zionist Organisation) put the case for Israel in attacking Egypt in self-defence. Nothing was published for an Arab.

## IX THE SIX DAY WAR

WHEN Kingsley Martin retired, the paper was taken over by Mr. John Freeman who continued the policies set out by his predecessor until he, in turn, resigned in 1965. Paul Johnson was then invited to be the editor of the leading journal in quite a spectacular promotion. His career with the paper started in 1954 as a correspondent in Paris before he became the Foreign Affairs Editor in 1955. His book on the Suez War indicated a promising future in international politics and a better understanding of the Arab side. The Arabs soon gave up the latter hope and Mr. Johnson himself gave up the former. His brief spell in the editorial chair accelerated the paper's drift away from the socialism of its founders. In reviewing Johnson's recent collection of articles, *Statesman and Nation*, Mr. Clive James wrote:

« As editor of the *New Statesman* Mr. Johnson was widely held to have completed that paper's withdrawal from the forward positions of socialism. At last abandoning all pretence to being anything else than excessively well connected, the *New Statesman* went Establishment in surface tone as well as deep fact. A lot of Left journalists with uneasy consciences about their own living standards were glad — a lot gladder than their equivalents to the right of centre — to find Mr. Johnson making such a sitting duck of himself. »<sup>1</sup>

(1) *The Observer*, 6 June 1971.

This posture cast its natural shadow on the Middle East. The new regimes in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Southern Arabia and Algeria were to him no more than a collection of dictatorships. «Oh for the good old days of Nuri Said», he wrote in comment on the situation in Iraq. The positive reforms, the emancipation of the peasantry and women, the end of foreign domination and capitalist/feudalist exploitation were nothing to him. His friends and oracles were to be found, not among the fighters for the workers and struggling colonial natives, but among the well-to-do and respectable. Of all the Arabs, he could find only one deserving his admiration, namely, the Lebanese entrepreneur, Emile Bustani, the «honest millionaire» as he called him, who alone could mend the bridges with the West. Nasser, however, remained the only Arab radical leader for whom Johnson's mild admiration remained to the end. But the stars of the *New Statesman* and President Nasser were ordained to travel along ever divergent paths. Kingsley Martin died before he could fulfil his wish and interview Nasser, and Nasser died before Paul Johnson could achieve the very same dream.

Of all the apologists for the Arab case, he selected for his place of admiration, the Conservative Mr. Anthony Nutting and not Mr. Christopher Mayhew, the Labourite.<sup>2</sup> Another vexing habit I personally found in his writing was the way in which he frequently addressed himself to the Arab «intellectuals».

Paul Johnson's position was made clear by appearing as a witness for the Israeli side on the BBC television trial «Your Witness». But he made his attempt, after his own fashion, to turn the position upside down in the

columns of his London Diary: «But my chief anxiety was to avoid the role of a partisan. Although I was an Israeli witness, much of my sympathy lies with the Arab peoples...» It must have been such undertakings which built up so much dislike for the young editor among the *New Statesman's* former readers. He went on to put his own understanding of this intractable problem:

«Although the Arab-Israeli dispute appears complex, in essence it has great simplicity: The Israelis want to sit round a table and talk peace, the Arab states do not. Herein lies the decisive weakness of the Arab case. Until they change their policy on this point, violence will continue; once they change it, all the other problems, from refugees to frontiers can be rapidly resolved.»<sup>3</sup>

Paul Johnson was destined to handle the Six Day War and its aftermath until he was replaced by Mr. Crossman.

The Sinai campaign of 1956 was followed by seasonal battles and raids in which the superiority of the Israeli combat power on the ground and in the air made itself evident time and time again. Together with the Sinai Campaign, these battles should have removed any doubt about who was a danger to whom. The military experts knew the situation quite well and voiced their opinions accordingly. But the opinions of the experts rarely make up public opinion, especially when they go against the inclinations of the publicists. The Middle East military balance was also muddled by the Arabs themselves whose own military announcements were not always accurate. Israel, therefore, continued to look like the party threatened with extinction at any moment. Such a notion was propagated by Israel and the Zionist Organisation

(2) See London Diary, 10 Jan. 1969.

(3) 21 June 1968.

for many reasons, of which fund-raising came to the fore.

The *New Statesman*, and any paper in sympathy with Israel, could not dismiss as sheer idle talk the statements of some Arab leaders and their words of revenge, of washing out the 1948 dishonour, destroying the bastion of imperialism, etc. The image of the young democratic and socialist state, the miracle of the Middle East, threatened with totalitarian enemies, emerged in most articles on Israel and her problem. The *New Statesman*, however, was more fallacious in its portrayal than the regular and official Zionist press. The 1966/7 winter was Israel's winter of discontent. Unemployment and economic stagnation reached an unprecedented low mark for the country, with internal strife and high emigration as a result. These difficulties were discussed on the pages of such papers as the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish Observer*, not to mention the Israeli press. The only article dealing with Israel's internal troubles carried by the *New Statesman* in the first half of 1967 was a report on the trial of two journalists who published something about the connivance of the Israeli intelligence in the murder of the Moroccan opposition leader Ben Barka. The reporter attributed the sensitivity of the Israeli censor to Israel's «seige mentality».

When Nasser ordered the United Nations troops out of Sinai and Gaza and closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, the paper was in no doubt that Egypt was in the wrong and that Israel's existence was again put in jeopardy by the Arabs. Two despatches from Tel Aviv and Beirut by Naomi Shepherd and Michael Faucher gave the early reactions to the crisis, in fairly moderate terms, along those lines. The editorial treatment was carried on 2 June: «Arabs, Israelis and Morals». The

editor repeated the Israeli theory that a future president of Egypt would cross the border in peace only when the destruction of Israel was seen to be unattainable. The course of the Western world was, therefore, clear. They must make an unequivocal declaration of support for Israel's right to exist as a state, guarantee her frontiers, and affirm her rights to use both the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal for her shipping. The same issue also carried two reports from Israel, one by Gerda Cohen describing the psychological state of the people and the other by Naomi Shepherd calling on the Great Powers to support Israel in her «hour of crisis».

There was a distinct difference between the image of Israel in 1956 and her image in 1967, carefully built up by excluding any direct imperialist participation in the go-it-alone invasion. Sympathies with Israel in 1967, therefore, suffered none of the embarrassment of the former campaign.

Whilst the *New Statesman* insisted in 1956 that Israel, together with Britain and France, should carry out the U.N. resolution unconditionally, it changed its position in 1967 and said that the United Nations had no business with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Peace, the editorial argued on 9 June, must be made directly between the Arabs and the Israelis. This was a stand diametrically opposed to the journal's attachment to the relevance of the international authority. Indeed, there were two other conflicts during the same period under discussion, namely, Biafra and Aden, on which the United Nations had really no original commitment but which nevertheless were treated by the paper as matters relevant to the United Nations. In an editorial carried on 16 June 1970, the editor urged a solution to the situation in Nigeria by calling in the United Nations as «one of the

few effective bodies in the world» to effect genuine neutrality. The one case which was created by the United Nations and remained under its supervision, the paper thought was not to be solved by the organisation. The eventual resolution accepted by the U.N. in November 1967, was criticised, and the sponsor of the resolution, the United Kingdom, was advised to back out of it (13 November 1970). In an earlier article (18 July 1969) Paul Johnson expressed joy for the failure of the United Nations to reach a solution. It is time, he said, to lift the embargo on the delivery of arms to Israel. Suddenly the ideal of the United Nations and the whole basis of democracy were described as a «crude numerical system». «In all this pantomime», he wrote, «Lord Caradon emerges as a serio-comic figure, industriously trying to square the circle».

Paul Johnson's attitude to the U.N. position is given additional expression in the following two paragraphs cited verbatim from his London Diary (10 January 1969). The United Nations, the *Times*, the Pope, General De Gaulle and the whole « world » were condemned for condemning Israel:

«The Security Council resolution on the latest Arab-Israeli crisis was wholly onesided, was greeted with delight by the Arabs and will naturally be taken by them as an open invitation to step up terrorism against Israel. It can only bring the UN into still further discredit. The *Times* leader which commented on it («Contempt for the United Nations is a familiar and depressing aspect of Israel policy») was a model of partiality. Indeed the *Times* now shows itself increasingly pro-Arab and hostile to Israel. On the Monday after the Beirut raid (its leader condemned this without any specific mention

of the Athens incident), it even contrived to publish a letter — sent by hand, I imagine — which contained the choice phrase: 'As one whose feelings of admiration for loyal Jewish citizens of Britain and America is long established...' I am deeply depressed by world reactions to the crisis, which show a lack of balance and a willingness to adopt double standards which bode ill for us all in 1969. Naturally that old humbug, Pope Paul (Lebanon contains a large community of Maronites who acknowledge his authority) was quick with one-sided condemnation. The Jewish Minister for Religious Affairs retorted sharply: 'The Pope's voice has not been heard when Jewish worshippers were attacked at the tomb of the Patriarchs, in the same way that the voice of his predecessor [Pius XII] had not been heard when millions of Jews were exterminated in Europe'. A grudging and minimal Vatican amend followed.

Other pro-Arabs behaved equally predictably. Naturally there was yapping from such veterans as Ian Gilmour and Christopher Mayhew. But I was sorry to see Anthony Nutting, whom I have hitherto greatly admired, suggest, in a letter to the *Times*, that Israel should be forced to 'disgorge' the so-called occupied territories. Surely he, of all people, should have recollected that this was precisely the term his old boss, Anthony Eden, used about Nasser and the Canal. De Gaulle, of course, excelled himself: his boorish behaviour to the Israeli ambassador, Walter Eytan (one of the most delightful and distinguished men in international diplomacy), was neatly matched by his unilateral decision to cut off all arms and spares to Israel. I doubt if this took the Israelis by surprise; they are aware by now, as

Britain and America have long since discovered, that if you have De Gaulle for an ally you don't need any enemies. In any case the Israelis know *comment se débrouiller*. What worries them is the evident interest that Britain and the US (let alone France, of course) is showing in the so-called Soviet peace-plan. As I understand it, the real object of this scheme is to provide for the occupation by an international force of both sides of the present frontier, under the threat of sanctions against Israel, until such time as Russia is satisfied that the Arab forces are in a condition to engage in a fourth attempt to drive the Israelis into the sea. It is a formula for World War\*.

Particularly worthy of note in these citations is his expression «so-called occupied territories». His outburst was aroused by the condemnation of Israel by practically everybody outside Zionist circles, because of her attack on Beirut Airport and the destruction of 13 airliners, «the expensive chunks of metal» as he called them. The more Israel was condemned, the more Paul Johnson rallied to her lonely position. Britain, he said in his leader on the subject, was only angry because she was responsible for the insurance, and America because she had shares in the chunks. Short of moral justification for the attack, he resurrected the old story of Israel's survival: «Israel exists and is entitled to preserve herself from extinction — the avowed aim of the Arabs. Three times, they tried with their regular forces to destroy her, and have failed...» The author of a book on the Suez War has forgotten all he said in that book, but he was here obviously out of form. His staccato sentences betray an emotional strain.

The defeat of the Arabs and conquest of their lands

were hailed by the editor in the same foregoing article of 9 June: «Whatever our sympathies, we can be glad that the issue has been swiftly decided». The invasion was described as a pre-emptive attack and those who disagreed with the Israeli version, including General De Gaulle, Bertrand Russell, U Thant, George Brown and Christopher Mayhew, were all denounced. Both France and her President received repeated attacks from the journal. An article under the heading «Perfidious France» alluded to the role played by the French during World War II in the liquidation of the Jews. George Brown was caricatured as «The Dancing Man» and «Brown of Arabia».

The *New Statesman* envisaged the solution, to be reached directly between the Arabs and the Israelis, to exist along such lines as the recognition of Israel by the Arab states, the dissolution of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the end of «terrorism», opening the frontiers for trade and tourism, ending the economic boycott, implementing the 1949 armistice terms (not the armistice borders) and opening the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. The crucial question of the frontiers was dealt with in stages. Immediately after the war, the forthright Israeli annexation of Jerusalem was accepted by the paper. No one expected Israel, the editor said, to keep the dividing wall in «her capital». Mervyn Jones wrote, on 10 November, in his «Jerusalem the Golden»: «Now that it's united, Jerusalem emerges as the most fascinating city in the world, as well as tenably the most beautiful». Together with the Arab part of Jerusalem, the Latrun should also go to Israel. No further territorial gains

(4) The concept of the Israel side of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was rejected by the U.N., and all foreign countries refused to put their diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

should be expected by the Israeli Government, the paper emphasised at the same time. On 10 November, Kingsley Martin inserted in his London Diaries the following suggestive paragraph on the Syrian territory:

«When I am told that the Israelis ought to give up all the territory which they acquired in the Six-Day War, I recall a visit almost 20 years ago to a *kibbutz* on the Syrian frontier. There was a hill just above it from which my guide explained that the Syrians lobbed mortar shells onto the village. I said: 'Why, if you were there, are you still alive? you can have had no suitable defence.' 'Oh, no', he replied; 'Every building in the *kibbutz* was destroyed. We lay flat underneath, and when the Syrians came down to take over, we scrambled out and killed them', which perhaps explains why General Dayan is not ready to surrender the Syrian heights.»

A freak opinion was expressed on Jerusalem when Anthony Howard wrote the London Diary after the fire of the Aqsa Mosque. He said that the fire had proved that the annexation of Arab Jerusalem was bound to bring trouble. Neither Anthony Howard nor John Hatch, who defended Nasser's position, were heard again on the Arab-Israeli problem.

In the meantime, the Israeli politicians flirted with many ideas as a solution for the occupied territories in an exercise designed for the disposal of the conquered non-Jewish inhabitants rather than of the conquered territories. One such idea was the establishment of a Palestinian state linked by a treaty relationship with Israel. The plan was echoed in the *New Statesman* by an article carried on 18 September 1970. «Obviously a Palestinian state would have to include most of the West Bank territories» as well as Jordan. The Arabs, therefore,

are not to expect all the occupied West Bank but most of it. The fate of the Gaza Sector came in to the discussion in an editorial published on 1 January 1971. Gaza, the editor said, should not prove difficult. «Gaza was never a part of Egypt.» The same could not be asserted in regard to Sharm ash-Shaykh or the Golan Heights, but the editor still saw no reason for Egypt or Syria to have them back. It was within such new orientations that the *New Statesman* called on the Foreign Office to withdraw its UN resolution no. 242 of 22 November 1967 stipulating an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories.

Double standards have often double angles of view. Whilst the Arabs accused the *New Statesman* of this sin, the *New Statesman* accused the Arabs of the same — of giving themselves the right to attack Israel and denying the Israelis the right to reply. This was said in conjunction with the sinking of the *Eilat* by the Egyptian coastal missiles — in what the journal described as a «naked and brutal act of war» and a flagrant violation of the cease-fire». The *Eilat* was established to have been cruising within the Egyptian territorial waters and the Egyptians gave it more than one warning to keep out without making any impression. The accounts of the paper intimated that this was the case. Egypt fired one salvo, it said, then there were two hours' lapse before the lethal attack came. The action still remained to the paper «a naked and brutal act of war», and the Arabs were accused of double standards. But the editorial made some allowance for the dilemma faced by Nasser, whom it described as a moderate politician. After all, Nasser had to convince the Arabs of Egypt's ability.

General Dayan replied by hitting at Egypt's economy by destroying its oil refineries. The *New Statesman* condemned the reprisal act in an article following the

same wishful thinking. «The present situation», the paper said, after years of advocating that peace would be round the corner once Israel's invincibility was shown to the Arabs, «may seem almost beyond solution as well as highly explosive; but it could be transformed overnight if Egypt conceded Israel's right to exist. This would open the road to Israeli concessions and to negotiations and so should be the prime object of the great powers and the UN.»

This passage entailed a surprising deception of the readers, because Egypt did accept the UN resolution no. 242 which provided for, inter alia, «termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace...»

By now the identification of the *New Statesman* with the official policies of Tel Aviv has become almost complete, a position which began to cost the paper some ground among the Israeli and Jewish «left» who, although as anxious about the future of Israel as the *New Statesman*, did not view the policies pursued by the Israeli Government and the Zionist Organisation with the same indulgence shown by the *New Statesman*. Such a development was occasionally reflected in the correspondence columns.

The identification with Israeli policy is only almost complete, but the identification with the Israeli lines of publicity is truly complete. Thus Paul Johnson wrote that «Egypt was a small backward country, incapable of defending itself...»<sup>5</sup> Richard Crossman discussed the military balance and concluded that it became «an

unbalance of power», in which the Israeli forces could enter Amman, Beirut and Damascus in a day (31 July 1970). Yet, whenever the conflict was discussed, Israel was presented as the vulnerable weakling threatened with extinction by its mightier neighbours. The claim of pre-emption alleged as a justification for the Israeli attack was gradually dropped by the Israeli politicians and soldiers themselves, but the paper continued to uphold the old story. The attacks made against airlines and Israeli offices abroad by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a minority guerrilla organisation, were erroneously put on the doorstep of Fateh, the majority organisation, although both organisations have repeatedly issued statements respectively accepting and repudiating responsibility. These attacks were originally meant for Israeli installations and personnel, but were extended later on to embrace «capitalist» interests. The *New Statesman* however represented the attacks as directed against «Jews at home and abroad» (20 February 1970). The refugees, it was said, became refugees because of the Arab governments and not because of Israel or the *Haghana*. The guerrillas themselves were, of course, stamped as terrorists. Mervyn Jones, who went to the Middle East in 1969 and sent a number of reports on Fateh, published an article in which he argued that the Palestine guerrillas could not be called partisans but terrorists. Israel, on the other hand, was described by Paul Johnson as «the militant peace maker».

(5) Johnson, *The Suez War*, p. 26.

## A SURVEY OF TREATMENT

FROM the foregoing chapters, the *New Statesman* comes out as a Zionophile magazine. The editors and regular contributors to the paper made no secret of it and would probably be offended if they were described otherwise. Yet the lofty morality and sense of justice which the journal tried to build up for itself during its long history would make its editorial board uneasy with the thought of partiality — and partiality to « nationalism » of all things.

The preceding discussions may be subjectively selective, although this was by no means the intention of the writer — an ex-admirer of this paper, anxious to redeem his former love rather than abuse it. A closer look at the reports and articles, examined with comparative statistics, may help here to delineate the portrait with less chance of impression error.

The most salient feature of the *New Statesman* coverage of Middle Eastern affairs is the lack of the Arab voice in the debate. The suppression of the Arab voice in the Western World has been an essential component of the Zionist propaganda strategy, discussed by this writer at some length elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Whenever there was a crisis in Palestine, the *New Statesman* had a correspondent, generally Zionist or Jewish, on the Zionist side of the fire line, rarely on the Arab side. The paper had not one Arab

---

(1) *Verdict in Absentia*, Palestine Research Center, 1969.

correspondent or casual contributor, nor any reporter stationed in any Arab capital, as was the case in Tel Aviv. This was not due to a lack of journalistic talent on the part of the Arabs. One of the *New Statesman's* pillars in its early history was the Syrian, Dr. C.W. Saleeby, whose articles on public health were widely enjoyed. There have always been Arab writers visiting or living in Britain and Arab scholars lecturing in British universities. Once or twice, their knowledge was solicited on this or that subject, but practically never on the Palestine question.

Out of the masses of volumes I leafed through, the only article I could find written by an Arab intellectual on the subject was the one contributed by Clovis Maksoud on 11 August 1967 under the title, «The Arab Case». The article drew some comment from a Mr. Gordon Bentley:

«I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw the article by Clovis Maksoud. For the past two months the constant stream of pro-Israeli articles that have appeared in your journal have filled me with despair, and have led me to gloomily suppose that you are sponsored at least by the CIA and possibly even by the Israeli government itself. So distrustful of your claim to be an organ of the Left have I become recently that I am even inclined to view Mr. Maksoud's contribution with suspicion. It has been printed, I feel sure, merely to support your image as a responsible or neutral journal, and I await with morose expectancy the great trumpet-blast of Zionist apologia which will fill the pages of your next issue.»

Mr. Bentley's morose expectancy and reading of the mind of the editor were not far from the facts. Maksoud's essay was commissioned under the editorship of Paul

Johnson. In advising the would-be *New Statesman* writer, Mr. Johnson wrote the following:

«Admit to your friends that there is a case to answer; then demolish it. Permit your enemies the luxury of an argument; then show it's unsound. I always think it is best to concede as much to the opposite case as you possibly can — short of actual surrender. That will persuade people who don't initially agree with you, or are wavering, that you are fair-minded. They are then likely to attach much more weight to your final paragraphs in which you ram your own case home.»<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Maksoud's essay had no follow-up from the Arab side and the *New Statesman's* pages were opened large and wide for «the great trumpet-blast of Zionist apologia», to ram their case home.

In his testimony to the Royal Commission on the press, Kingsley Martin lamented the unbalanced information which the average citizen had been receiving from the daily paper which he read. To correct the picture and safeguard the voter from the resultant conclusions which he was bound to reach out of the tilted data, he advised that each paper should allocate at least one column, preferably on the front page, for an article by an opposing critic or expert representing the other view.<sup>3</sup> This is a sad example of how idealists preach abstinence and take four wives. Mr. Martin died — and with him the answer to our question why his *New Statesman* did not at least practice his advice.

Information, however, is essential from any useful paper; essential even when such information represents

(2) Johnson, P., *Statesman and Nations*, London, 1971, p. 10.  
(3) Martin, K., *The Press the Public Wants*, pp. 111-117.

the opposing view. In answer to such a need, a few British experts of pro-Arab inclination were sometimes invited to put the Arab case or discuss a certain Arab development. Strangely enough, when the *New Statesman* decided to include such a contribution, it was generally the rightist expert who was invited to do so by the «socialist» journal. More than once it was Peter Mansfield's and Desmond Stewart's task to put the pro-Arab version to the readers. This may look like the *New Statesman's* idea that the Israeli side is the side of the left and the Arab side is that of the conservatives. To argue the Arab case from a Marxist or a socialist angle would be a negation of either socialism or «New Statesmanship»! Yet, it must be also confessed that insofar as the Middle East was concerned, the political colour of the writer hardly mattered to the editor either way. Many of the contributors on the Zionist side could be described as anything but socialists; Jon Kimche and Leonard Stein, for example.

Earlier in this tract, the independence of the editor of this journal was emphasised as the accepted policy of its shareholders. Whatever the advantages or disadvantages of this policy may be, the Arabs became its victims. With the exception of Sharp, all his successors were whole-heartedly committed to the Zionist side. The positions of Kingsley Martin and Paul Johnson have been outlined above. Paul Johnson kept the chair warm for Mr. Richard Crossman who took over in June 1970, soon after the resignation of the Labour Government, of which he was the Secretary for Social Services. Crossman was no stranger to the paper which he served as an assistant editor from 1938 to 1955, and he continued to write for it and take an interest in its work thereafter.

He is also the one editor who was a full and respon-

sible representative of the Labour Party. Another quality which differentiated him from his predecessors is that he is an expert on the Palestine question and more knowledgeable on the Middle East in general. Within the inner circle of the Labour Party, his opinions on the Middle East had their weight. The knowledge and experience which he acquired go back to 1947, when he was appointed by the Attlee Government to represent it in the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, which recommended the partition of the country. The story of this work is given in his memoirs of it, *Palestine Mission*. Early in the book he makes the assertion, «I was not committed to any public statement about Palestine or Zionism».<sup>4</sup> His sympathies, however, were far from the neutral position which he suggested, and the Palestine question was the political question in which sentiment and sympathy is all that mattered. Mr. Crossman's feelings were later expressed in the dedication of his book to those who harassed his Labour Government and shot at the British servicemen in Palestine, «To my friends of Naharia, Shari Zwi and Mishmar Ha'emek».

In *Palestine Mission*, the author sets out by indulging in the pointless exercise of how he reached his conclusions from the purely neutral position of judge, an exercise whose futility is the hub of socialist thought! He soon came to the conclusion that Zionism was a good thing and that he was in sympathy with it because he was an anti-Semite and hated to see the Jews integrated with the gentiles (itself a tenet of the Zionist ideology). «Who exactly were these people who claim to be both Jews and Englishmen...?», asked the socialist commissioner.<sup>5</sup> If this conclusion brought joy to the hearts

(4) Crossman, R., *Palestine Mission*, London, p. 12.

(5) *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

of the Zionists, the other conclusion condemned the Arabs beyond redemption. «In my view we cannot assist the Jews in Palestine in any way they would call assistance without violating the Arab rights.»<sup>6</sup>

Why this conclusion condemned the Arabs beyond redemption in the eyes of the Labourite editor of the *New Statesman* is that he himself was not insensitive to the future of the Palestinians or their rights. Like many British politicians and idealists he believed that the Jews would take the Arabs with them along their road of self-liberation and betterment. But the Jews in Israel did not do that, and expressed the opinion that they were not going to do it; their line of development is a separate one; they are a people apart. This is a line odious to any socialist or idealist. Odious also are the bloodshed, repression and expulsion, by force or inducement, which must accompany such a policy. For a neutral judge, if there is such a thing, this development must have its repercussions; the editor is expected to re-examine his position. But the editor, in this instance, had made up his mind that he could not help the Jews «without violating Arab rights».

It was out of a bewildered conscience, which Mr. Crossman must have begun to experience as a result of Israel's more recent history, that he inaugurated his editorship by addressing his famous open letter to the Israeli Foreign Minister on the front cover of the journal on 31 July 1970. We cite the letter in full as a sample of the Labourite editor's thoughts and involvements vis-à-vis the Middle East:

Dear Abba,

For nearly six years you and I have been

---

(6) *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

reading each other's minds through Top Secret files. You have had the reports from your embassy in London on our secret cabinet discussions and decisions; I have been reading our Foreign Office telegrams from Tel Aviv. Occasionally we met at receptions; once we shared a platform and I had to listen to you saying the things I used to say but was now prevented from saying for fear of hostile Arab reactions. Not once could we confide in each other as we used to do in those terrible, exhilarating years when the issue hung in the balance whether the great powers would allow a Jewish nation to be reborn in Palestine or stifle it at birth.

Each in his own way, we won our political spurs in that struggle. And I suspect that both of us, looking back now, feel that to have been the most worthwhile period in our lives. A lucky fate had permitted us to be in on an act of political creation which we both believed would provide the long-term cure for anti-semitism in the Western world, while creating the conditions for a post-imperial renaissance which would transform the Middle East within a generation.

Twenty years ago we looked forward to the 1970s so confidently. How do they look now that they have become the gnawing present? Now that I can write to you freely, I cannot help putting the question in that way. Let us count our blessings first. The success of the Ingathering of the Exiles has exceeded our wildest dreams. Out of the broken shell of the British mandate has emerged an Israeli democracy, open to every Jew the world over, whose exploits in peace and war have purged the Diaspora of the inferiority complex which was historically

both cause and effect of anti-semitism. It is largely thanks to the existence of Israel that Jew and non-Jew now live in the West on terms of genuine equality.

But what of the Arab-Jewish accord which we predicted should follow the winding up of Britain's Middle Eastern empire? Alas there has been no rebirth, no social revolution, but war, declared or undeclared, from the first day of Israel's independent life. For a brief moment it looked as though victory might be used for reconciliation. But the Six-day War, as Moshe Dayan told the Israeli air force last week, is now in its fourth year. Even worse, the fratricidal struggle for a promised land to which Israelis and Palestinians both have a total attachment is reviving the great powers' imperialism which we expected to see extinguished — but this time with a significant difference. Twenty years ago the excuse for great-power control of the Middle East was the vacuum of power which would result from withdrawal. Neither Jew nor Arab, we were told, was militarily capable of shaping the course of history. This is now replaced by an unbalance of power. Within a day Israeli forces can be in Amman, in Beirut, in Damascus.

It is this simple fact which has driven the Arabs to seek Russian assistance, and compelled the rulers of the Kremlin to intervene on their side more expensively and more dangerously than they would have wished. And because intervention breeds counter-intervention a similar process is now at work in Washington. The Americans are compelled, not to intervene on your side (that would not be tolerated), but to provide you with the means of waging war successfully whatever help the Russians

give your neighbours.

And you still wage war successfully, justifying each costly turn of the military screw, each new and deeper penetration, by recalling the harsh lessons of your 22-year national history. Others can blame you for suspecting every UN mediator, for distrusting the word of every American President and relying on nothing but your own military strength. I do not. But somehow or other this process of military escalation must be broken. Like everyone else, I have strongly supported your efforts to persuade your colleagues to accept the American cease-fire proposal; and feared their ability to hedge it round with every condition the soldiers can think up. What in fact alarms me is your failure to persuade those soldiers to see that the greatest military risk they face is not the dangers of a peace initiative but the certain consequences of continuing without one.

Your military ascendancy is a wasting asset, just as the territories you have occupied become heavier liabilities the longer you hold them. I know you did not want this military ascendancy. I know that your occupation of the West Bank was unpremeditated, that you recognise that the Suez Canal is not your natural frontier. I also know that any peace initiative you now take involves a military risk. But in a year's time the risk will be even greater and you will be even more reluctant to take it. The vision of Arab-Jewish accord which was so fervent and which has grown dim today, will grow dimmer still.

Moreover, that choice is being steadily and inevitably eroded within your own frontiers. Your

hold over the West Bank must grow even more oppressive the longer it lasts. Yet your government feels compelled by military necessity to plant a settlement at Hebron, an area which could not possibly remain Israeli in any peaceful solution. And what applies to Hebron applies throughout the territories occupied after the Six-day War. You took possession of them only in order to be able to withdraw safely. Yet every day the difficulties of withdrawal are increased by your own occupation policies. And these difficulties will be enhanced by the very democracy of which you are rightly proud. An Israel which aped the ethos of a Prussian state would be a contradiction in terms. Your young people have not forgotten the other half of the Zionist vision — the role of Israel in the Middle-Eastern renaissance. Given the choice between a policy completely dominated by military considerations and a peace initiative which involves some military risk, there will, I believe, always be a powerful minority in Israel which prefers the latter. I only hope and pray that you will not disregard the growing dismay of that minority until the doorway to peace, forced open by your military strength, is irrevocably closed. The Arabs can survive a decade of Jewish military domination. The Israel you and I believe in can't.

The letter coming from a former Secretary of State did not fail to arouse the criticism of the press. The close identification of the writer with the Government of Israel is made more evident than ever. So is the extent to which he absorbed the Zionist ideology: the establishment of a Jewish State would eradicate anti-Semitism; no real equality could be experienced by the diaspora Jews without the Jewish State in existence; Israel would

regenerate the Middle East and free it from foreign domination; the Jew should rely only on himself and mistrust the perfidious gentiles, and so on. Mr. Crossman's tenure of office, however, was brought to an abrupt end in March 1972, when he was sacked by the Board. His life-long dream of the *New Statesman's* editorship was found too closely identified with the Labour Party, and his dictatorial methods in running the paper did not please the staff. (He was generally known as Double Crossman.) The decline in the paper's circulation from more than 90,000 some ten years ago to barely 70,000 at the present did not show any signs of improvement under his guidance.

The succession of strongly pro-Zionist editors is another feature of the *New Statesman* as far as the Middle East is concerned. It was due to this feature that the Arab voice has been allowed no more than an off-stage whimper. The position of the *New Statesman* is better delineated by examining it in juxtaposition with the other British periodicals which may be bracketed together. We have taken for our sampling the *Economist*, the *Spectator* and *New Society*. The year 1967 is not a typical year for the Middle East coverage by any of the four sampled magazines, because of the urgent nature of two convulsions, namely, the fighting in Aden and the Arab-Israeli war. The former called for an unusual interest in the Arab World and the latter in the Israeli-Arab conflict, but it is on such issues that the newspaper coverage matters. In the following tables, figures given under the heading «On the Arabs» include articles and reports published on any aspect of the Arab World, despatches from the Arab side, contributions written by Arabs, or projecting the Arab case. The same in vice versa applies to the figures given under «On Israel».

Pro-Arab or pro-Israel is the trickiest question of all,

and the writer has no yardstick other than his own arbitrary judgement. There are, however, a few guidelines which he has followed as carefully as he could. As the majority of the Arab States have accepted the UN resolution on the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied territories, support for the resolution is therefore treated as a pro-Arab position, notwithstanding that a supporter of the resolution is a traitor in the eyes of many Arabs! This is also unfair to those members of the United Nations societies and similar idealists who prefer to view themselves as neutral. As Israel makes the implementation of the resolution dependent on the result of a direct negotiation between the two parties, an article which insisted on the Arabs sitting at the negotiation table with the Israelis and getting what settlement they best could get, is treated as pro-Israeli material. Such is the strange world of the Middle East that a man is pro-Israel or anti-Israel purely by believing in direct or indirect speech! The position of the Palestinian refugees has been one, probably the only, stable criterion. Those who supported their free choice to return or accept compensation pursuant to the UN resolution are treated as pro-Arab, and vice versa. Belief in the Israeli version of the responsibility for the 1967 war and the present impasse is treated as a pro-Israeli position also.

TABLE I

	On the Arabs	On Israel	Comments on the 1967 Crisis	Pro- Arab letters No. of words	Pro- Israel letters No. of words
Economist	79900	21700	42100	3700	3000
Spectator	19200	7500	9800	430	480
New Society	10200	6600	2300	920	—
New Statesman	17050	20600	5200	2370	3840

The *Economist*, therefore, offers the widest coverage of the area in every respect, but this is an unfair comparison as it is by far the largest and most expensive. The *Economist* also shows the strongest coverage «bias» in favour of the Arab World with a ratio of nearly 4:1 against Israel. The least interest in the area is shown by *New Society*, a weekly more involved in current domestic trends. The *Spectator* looks the poorest in published correspondance. This is, in fact, misleading as it carried quite a number of letters on the Middle East but its correspondents seem to be less inclined to take either side. Table I is only interested in the published letters decidedly partial to one side over the other in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The «bias» mentioned above is only credited as such comparatively. The item under «On the Arabs» covers an area of more than half a million square miles extending from the Atlantic coast to the Indian Ocean, and including 15 states. It is also inhabited by more than a hundred million people. Israel, on the other hand, is hardly 7900 square miles populated by less than three million people. These figures make our comparison ridiculous. Economically, the Arab World with its oil resources, communications importance and large markets also eclipses Israel. On the basis of such considerations, one expects an independent journal to give the Arab World a coverage ten or twenty times as much as that of Israel, at least.

But such considerations are not the whole thing for the press. It had been Kingsley Martin's opinion and the opinion of most other journalists that the press should give the people what the people wanted and what they felt, and the people in Britain are overwhelmingly pro-Israel. No one can tell precisely what any nation feels, but the polls carried out by the *Daily Telegraph* on this

particular issue may serve as an indication. The Gallup Poll conducted in November 1969 showed that the sympathies of the public in Britain were 34% with Israel and 5% with the Arabs.<sup>7</sup> In the light of this, the British press comes out quite favourably towards the Arabs, and courageous in its stand! The *New Statesman* receives far more pro-Israeli letters than anti-Israeli, yet the difference is only marginal according to our figures for 1967. The editor has probably been suppressing more pro-Israel letters than pro-Arab. But no editor should hope for thanks as may be seen from the two following letters published in the same number:

A. «Three letters from anti-Israelites, with only one short sensible reply (from Mr. Winston). What is your journal thinking of? I see that *Tribune* is anti-Israel also. Is the Left Wing losing all touch with reality?»

B. «After your support of the blitzkrieg for the extension of 'our borders' — as the Chief Rabbi of England's Volksisraeliten called the borders of Zionist-occupied Palestine — your paper should be renamed the Jew Statesman, and take for its motto whatever is the Hebrew equivalent of Sieg heil!»

Still, the press is not an automatic reflection; it has the duty of informing its public and often leading it. Kingsley Martin gives here the example of smoking. Most adults smoke but no paper writes in praise of smoking. The relationship of the quality periodicals with the public is also restricted — nothing like the relationship of the popular press. Each of the four periodicals surveyed above has a certain category of readership. *The Economist*, for example, gives a wider and more definite coverage of the Arab World because it addresses itself to

(7) *Daily Telegraph*, 1 Dec. 1969.

those involved in the field of international finance and economy. The *New Statesman*, on the other hand, has a larger proportion of Jewish readers. Some journalists admitted that they had to consider the strong Jewish community in Great Britain when they wrote. This community numbers 450,000 people. There are also in Britain about 210,000 Muslims and Arabs, but only a tiny number of them ever read the *New Statesman*.

There can be no cut and dried criterion for the kind of editorial treatment adequate for the Middle East. But whilst other papers took note of the larger and more substantial fifteen Arab states and gave them, collectively, a bigger space than Israel, the *New Statesman* completely ignored large chunks of the area and gave Israel a space larger than that given to the rest. Indeed, the paper treats Israel as if she is more important and eventful than the whole of Asia, as will be seen from the next table giving the paper's editorial interest country by country during 1970.<sup>8</sup>

TABLE II.

	<i>No. of Articles.</i>
United States.	28
Israel	14
(Plus articles on her conflict with the Arabs)	8
France	6
Vietnam	5
Each of Australia, India, Ireland and Germany	4
Each of China, South Africa, Cambodia, Egypt, Czechoslovakia and Nigeria	3
Each of Rhodesia, Chile, Italy, Pakistan, Hungary and Canada	2

(8) Articles do not include the shorter comments as given, for example, in «*London Diary*».

Each of the Soviet Union, Poland, Cuba, Brazil,  
Trinidad, Austria, Algeria, Tunisia,  
Yugoslavia, Greece and Sweden 1

Israel, in the opinion of the editor, is fourteen times as important as the whole of the Soviet Union. Only the United States deserved larger space in his paper. This is a position which can only be accepted from a paper catering for the lovers of Zion, according to the old maxim «love is blind». It is, otherwise, a dangerous piece of misinformation and a failure to carry the message of its founders, the message of internationalism and «scientific» socialism.

The partial information in which the *New Statesman* involved itself during the 1967 crisis is manifested again in depicting the picture from the angle of Tel Aviv. A further breakdown of the figures given in Table I confronts us with the following position:

TABLE III

	<i>No. of Words.</i>
Material on Aden	5760
Tourism in Tunisia	2800
King Faisal	950
The Arab Case, article by C. Maksoud	1600
Power struggle in Egypt	1500
Material on the June war	3000
Other Arab topics	1440
<hr/>	
Total material on the Arabs	17050
Press in Israel	950
Public Health in Israel	1500
Material on the June War	11600

Other Israeli topics	6550
<hr/>	
Total material on Israel	20600

There was four times as much material published from the Israeli side as there was from the Arab side. In the latter case the total of 3024 represents a factual report from Beirut by Michael Faucher (26 May),<sup>9</sup> an article written in London by John Hatch setting out the case for Egypt in the mildest terms, and a report from Egypt by Richard Kershaw. No war report came from the Arab side at all. In contrast, there were eight despatches sent from Israel during the same period (26 May to 30 June). In some issues the magazine carried two simultaneous reports from Israel, one by Gerda Cohen and the other by Naomi Shepherd. Although evocative, these reports were usually factual, rarely anti-Arab and sometimes conscious of the Palestine case. Naomi Shepherd's comments were well-balanced and, at times, critical of the Israeli Government.

Nor was 1967 an exceptional year. In the next table, a pattern of partiality in treatment emerges over the five years between 1967 and 1971.

TABLE IV

	<i>On the Arabs</i> <hr/> <i>No. of articles</i>	<i>On Israel</i> <hr/> <i>No. of articles</i>
1967	14	18
1968	2	10
1969	13	19
1970	7	14
1971	4	9

(9) Whose later despatches were not acceptable to the editor as they were not sufficiently sympathetic to the Israeli side.

The slightly balanced figures for 1969 are due to the number of reports sent from Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon by Mervyn Jones who went to the area to cover the prevailing moods of the Arabs and the guerrillas on the peace plans.

It is quite unfair to say that the *New Statesman* suppressed the Arab case altogether. It has been presented to the readers in a number of articles, of which Maksoud's essay is a notable example. None of the other periodicals examined in this survey carried any article by an Arab writer on the conflict under discussion. The correspondence columns are even fairer, all things considered. But a criticism must be made here. Such material was published weeks after the crisis, when the battle for the opinion of the public had been won and the crisis resolved.

A serious omission should be sufficient to disqualify the *New Statesman* as a magazine for the socialist reader. Table III gave a brief analysis of the material carried on the vast Arab World and its changing society. The material included articles on the British position in Aden, the touristic attraction of Tunisia, King Faisal's visit to London, the power struggle in Egypt, the Arab case on Palestine, articles on the June War, the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, and the conditions of the Palestine refugees. The social conditions of the people and particularly the sweeping readjustments introduced into the production relationships, the agrarian reforms, the distribution of the land, the workers' participation in management and profits, the massive nationalisation, etc., were all subjects hardly ever treated or even reported by the *New Statesman*. Although Mr. Crossman hailed the improvements brought about by the new order of Nasser, the socialistic (or, as often called, non-capitalist) programme followed in what are known as the

revolutionary Arab states remained in the dark for the *New Statesman* reader. The only thing which kept reappearing in print was the dictatorship, anti-Semitism, mediaevalism and corruption of the Arab World. In the midst of this, Israel remained the only oasis of hope and progress.

This writer is a disillusioned Arab socialist and has no reason to be complacent about anything in the Middle East. His feud with the present government of his own country left him stateless. Yet, he could not help but feel impressed by the social changes brought about by these regimes even within the span of four or five years. The image of the present Arab World as portrayed by periodicals like the *New Statesman* is derived from such data as given by the adversaries of the Arabs at best, and by embittered Arabs at worst. The latter group included those who lost their wealth, lands or jobs, those who missed the luxuries of the old days and the influence with which they could humiliate and bully anybody, and lastly, all those who accustomed themselves to a lazy life in which the Sahib took charge of everything.

These are the people, articulate with their American college's English and the salon's French, who mix with the representative of the Western press and sigh in his ear Paul Johnson's words, «Oh for the good old days of Nuri Said!»

The Arab World is not the only part of the world in which such changes are made by dictatorial means and often with bloodshed. Nor is it immune from the growth of the new class of bureaucrats and officers. Like any society venturing on a new form of production relationships, the Arab society must have its share of disappointments, failures, mistakes, abuses and so on. Socialists are the first people to understand that. Also, like all other

governments, Arab governments give more words than works. But words have their own magic and there has been many a battle fought over a word. For the first time in their long history, the people of the Middle East are told that the land they till and populate belongs to them and not to God, King or lord. They are the masters and their rulers are the servants. Once such notions are instilled and consolidated in the bosoms of the toilers, history must be changed to accommodate them. Hence the recent complaints about the «impudence of the mobs». Nasser's words, ridiculed as a cliché, «For dignity and honour» could not fail to agitate the mind.

Where is this digression taking us? The Arab World, and not Israel, is the key to Afro-Asia. It was there that the anti-imperialist movement was pioneered before the whole of the colonial world took on the flame. It was in Egypt that radical change, mass nationalisation and land expropriation and redistribution were first introduced by Nasser in an all embracing socialistic programme. The programme was soon learnt by the developing world as 'Nasserism.' From Egypt, the banner of social revolution spread to the rest of the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of Afro-Asia. It was in Egypt, Algeria, Syria and Iraq that the developing world learnt that twisting the tail of the imperialist lion is not a bad experience, that socialism is not a dirty word, that cooperation with the Soviet Union is not the end of the world, that recognition of China and East Germany is only common-sense.

This leading position of the Arab World is dictated by such factors as its proximity to Europe, its expansion deep into Africa and Asia, its relative development, its history and tradition, its being the centre and cradle of Islam and its composition of different ethnic groupings.

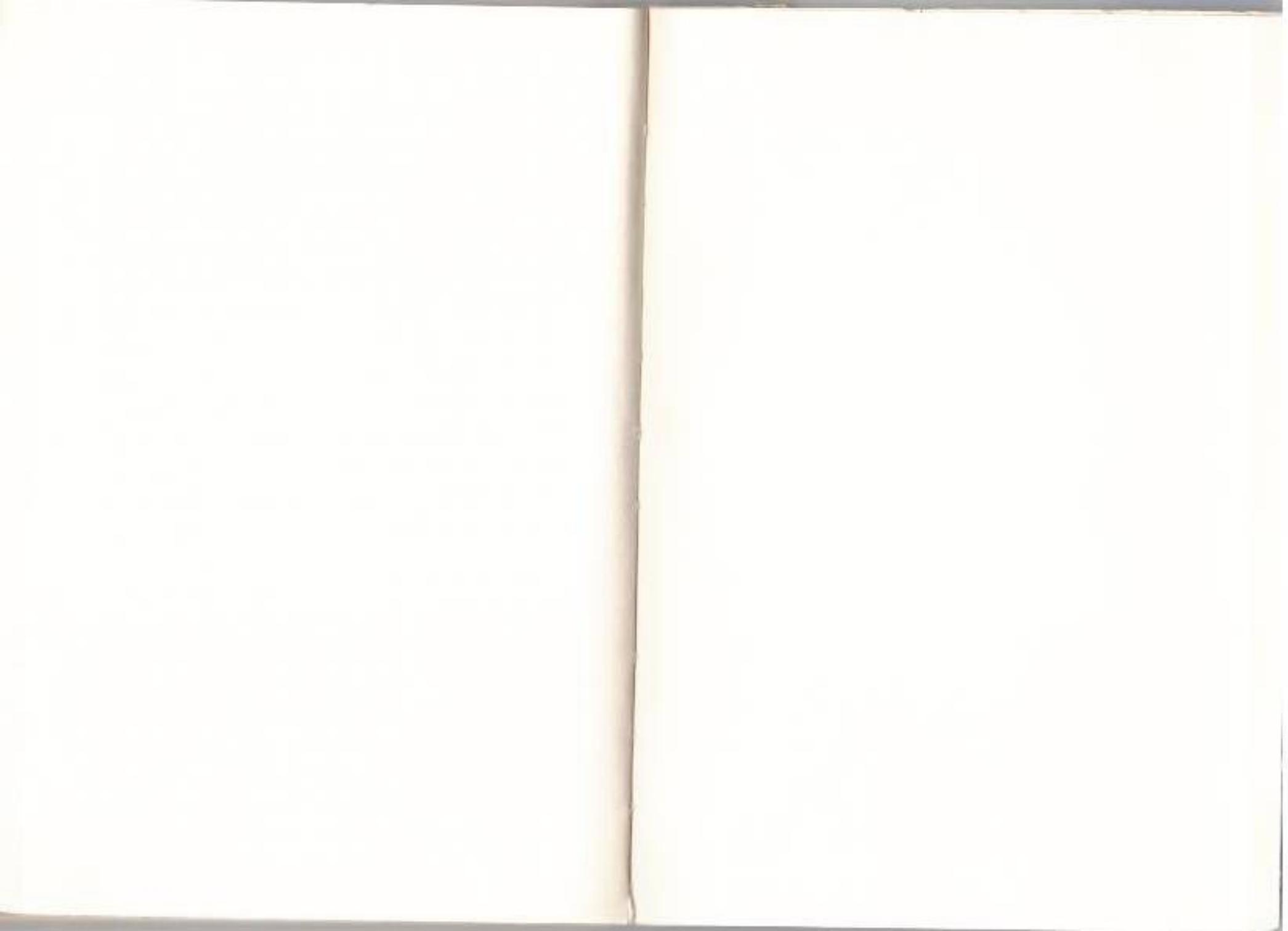
Israel is out of place in this world. Not only its

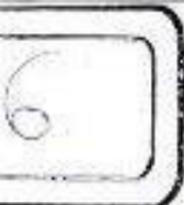
religion and white European entity keeps it out, but also its peculiar position and development, its unique dependence on a richer and stronger diaspora in everything she does. Things Jewish, Sigmund Freud noted, are things which remain among the Jews. The experiences of Israel are, therefore, irrelevant to the peoples of Afro-Asia, or to any people for that matter. It is a Zionist thesis that the Jews are a special people and Israel a unique state. Hence the disappointment of those underdeveloped countries which tried to learn from the experiences of Israel. The attempt to introduce the *Kibbutz* movement into Africa, for example, proved to be a complete fiasco. Such questions which rock Israel from time to time as, who is a Jew, and whether a Jew born of a gentile mother may or may not be buried in a Jewish cemetery, do not interest anybody in Lagos or Kabul. But the «No» which an Egyptian girl says to an arranged marriage thunders throughout the Third World.

The preoccupation with Israel's achievements at the expense of what went on in the Arab World is therefore a disservice to the reader who is interested in the fate of the colonial peoples and the developing world at large. It is also a slur on the moral integrity and consistency of the paper. The partisan spirit which it had revealed on behalf of the Zionist cause during and after World War II, though at odds with the anti-colonialist policy the paper professed to follow, is explicable. That spirit was inspired, not only by the plight of the Jews, but also by such notions as that Israel was going to regenerate the Middle East, take the Palestinian Arabs along with the Jews in the evolution of a new society, and bring peace to the area. There are some aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict which are debatable, but certain developments must be conceded as facts, even at the *New Statesman's* offices. The exis-

tence of Israel has caused the ruin and not the regeneration of the Middle East. The Israelis did not take the Arabs with them but kept them in their separate compartment. There has been continuous fighting and not peace around the Jewish state. All this might be answered by saying that the Arabs are responsible for the sad story. This we can only accept if we believe that the Arabs have been the masters of the situation in Palestine, the makers of history and the authors of events. The *New Statesman* fought hard for the United Nations; Israel is rejecting its decisions. The *New Statesman* doggedly opposed the right of conquest and the fruit reaped from military victories; Israel has annexed one plot of land after another since 1948 and is insisting on further prizes from her 1967 victory. The *New Statesman* was moved to a pitched hostility against a Labour Government on account of 100,000 Jewish refugees. There are now a million Arab refugees living under worse conditions without a future and without even a past. That the *New Statesman* should be insensitive to these facts is something which must put its moral claims into question and disqualify it from any authoritative judgement on the Middle East.

« New Statesmanship » was inaugurated as a new, logical and rational policy for imperial Britain. Part of it was to shed the old imperialist links and replace them by something less sentimental, vainglorious and costly. This has been achieved, and Britain's relations with the outside world are now based purely on cash, all in accordance with the prophecies of the London School of Economics. The fate of the colonial world has not been part of the « New Statesmanship » bargain. This is part of the labyrinth in which the *New Statesman* finds itself now. What is it that it can tell the developing nations relevant to their destinies? Indeed, what is it that it can now tell the developed nation of Britain?





The author of this book, Khalid Kishtainy, is an Iraqi who has lived and worked in London for many years. He is well-equipped to write on the *New Statesman* and the Middle East both by his legal training and by his participation in many post-war events of the British labour movement. ( His survey of the *New Statesman* and its relationship with the Middle East ( in particular with the Arab-Israeli conflict ) gives a useful case study of the labour "establishment" of Western Europe and of its dealing with a basically colonial issue ). Mr. Kishtainy has written other books among which are : *Palestine in Perspective*; *Verdict in Absentia*; *Whither Israel ?*